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The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its nearly 2 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 12,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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From mess cook to machine gunner, he quietly did his job, ignoring the taunts of soldiers he saved. *By Keith Nightingale*

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From culture to economics to peacekeeping, Britain's role in the world is far from diminishing. *By Alan W. Dowd*

30 The Six Triple Eight

The only battalion of African-American women sent overseas during World War II made quick work of a massive mail backlog, boosting troop morale. *By Matt Grills*

SEASON OF GIVING

American Legion Department of Indiana Commander Allen Connelly delivers winter kits to the Hoosier Veterans Assistance Foundation (HVAF) of Indiana in Indianapolis on Dec. 3. The Department of Indiana and Post 522 in Noblesville presented HVAF with \$17,000 in winter gear and toiletries to help homeless veterans as part of an American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors grant.

Photo by Ben Mikesell

ON THE COVER

Cpl. Annie Braceful of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion sorts mail.

U.S. Signal Corps photo



Sophisticated Exploration *On the Trail of Lewis & Clark*

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THE AMERICAN Legion MAGAZINE

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Veterans who served at least one day of active military duty during wartime, or are serving now, are potentially eligible for membership in The American Legion. Members must have been honorably discharged or still serving honorably.

ELIGIBILITY Dec. 7, 1941 – current
DATES OF MILITARY SERVICE April 6, 1917 – Nov. 11, 1918
(Merchant Mariners who served from Dec. 7, 1941, to Dec. 31, 1946, are also eligible.)
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'Chain Reaction'

Congratulations to Alan W. Dowd for another excellent article (December). It appears the People's Republic of China deliberately allowed COVID-19 to be exported to the West while locking down its own country. Years ago, I was concerned when President Carter ordered control of the Panama Canal be turned over to Panama, as it could make a treaty injurious to our national interest. And of course that's what happened, with China now having a degree of control at each entrance to the canal.

– Bill Willis, West Baden, Ind.

If Benedict Arnold was guilty of treason for attempting to sell West Point – then merely a promontory of land overlooking the Hudson River long before the U.S. Military Academy was established – then what should we think of so many American business directors knowingly putting our country in jeopardy by making so much military, medical and other technology dependent on communist China, a known enemy and one with far more potential to harm America than King George III could ever have mustered?

I dare say the vast majority of our fellow countrymen are unaware of the extent of China's control over our nation. This is a great article, a vital article.

– Joe Bahret, Mechanicsburg, Pa.

After reading Alan Dowd's article, it made me sick to think how our elected officials in Washington could let China get the upper hand on us like that, not to mention the corporations

that moved their businesses over there just to make loads of extra profits to fill their already bloated bank accounts. Maybe we should have a nationwide boycott on all Chinese-made products. Say what you want about President Trump, but he saw this happening and started U.S. companies moving back to America. I hope President Biden will continue this.

– Steve Pratt, Bennington, Vt.

It was good to read Alan Dowd's article about rethinking our economic dependence on China. We should always produce a minimum quantity of essential items for our survival and not count on another country to come to our aid, especially a dictatorship like China so averse to our system of government. I know this is not the most economical method to approach national self-reliance, but it is one of the costs of being free.

– John V. Frega, Riverside, Ill.

'Open With Care'

I find Lance Frazer's article (Living Well, December) most enlightening in how many civilians see veterans. I was especially fascinated by his reference to Elizabeth Neilson and her published study about veterans with "rigid adherence" to traditional masculinity.

I followed her recommendation of Jackson Katz films to better understand this traditional masculinity. What I came back with was an understanding that such men are prone to violence and prejudice – that we are responsible for our PTSD and antisocial behaviors. We need to *trust* the medical and social professions and believe they *know better*. I would have more confidence in this advice if veteran suicide rates were not at the level they are, or for the fact that there are more homeless veterans than ever before.

It infuriates me when veterans who were given orders to fight our country's enemies are told to give up their so-called traditional masculinity. They deserve better treatment, not this tripe.

– David G. Groves, Salem, Mo.

The helping type

National Commander Bill Oxford's message (December) had special meaning for me, especially when I saw the comments from Michael Klasno of Kingwood, Texas. Hurricane Harvey flooded my son's home in Kingwood the week before Labor Day 2017. I hauled a pickup load of supplies from Omaha and helped with the cleanup for two weeks. Shortly after Labor Day, a

mid-morning cheery voice rang out, "Breakfast burritos and cold water!" That voice belonged to Michael Klasno, who had bought them for the entire crew of workers. Michael, when travel allows a trip to Kingwood, the next burrito is on me.

– Lionel Reilly, Elkhorn, Neb.

'Harvey Pratt's Path of Life'

The article by Jeff Stoffer (November) about Harvey Pratt is inspirational. He has served his nation and his ancestral Cheyenne heritage in a multitude of ways. I had never heard of a "veil baby," but Pratt's most intriguing comment is the "silent scream." Many a mother has endured the silent scream when informed that a loved one has joined the military, especially in times of armed conflict.

The "path of life," as Pratt calls it in the Native American tradition, is true for all of us, regardless of race, creed or color. His Warrior's Circle of Honor at the National Native American Veterans Memorial is simple but beautiful. Bravo Zulu!

– John E. Mensch, Bloomfield, Ind.

'Maintain or Drain'

Regarding Ken Olsen's article (November), send a copy to every member of the new Congress, asking their position on undertaking some kind of program to address dam failure. For or against? This could be a constructive way to stimulate action. Publish answers in a future issue or online.

Much of U.S. infrastructure, especially dams and bridges, is in sad shape. Programs to

address this problem would provide employment and prevent potentially dangerous situations from ending in catastrophe. This should be a non-controversial and bipartisan issue.

– Arthur M. Fell, Longwood, Fla.

Merchant Mariners

Regarding Douglas Perret Starr's letter (November), he is absolutely correct about the "gross error of identification" in confusing a merchant marine (which is a nation's fleet of civilian manned merchant vessels) with a member of the Marine Corps.

As for Starr's statement, "They were employees, not warriors," I would point out that during World War II, U.S. merchant mariners (some of whom were employed directly by the U.S. government) sustained a higher casualty rate than did the members of the Marine Corps (also government employees), and that mariners were being killed (in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters) and/or being made POWs for a full eight months before the Marines landed on Guadalcanal. In addition, 142 cadets of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (civilians all) lost their lives in military actions. Although the definition of "warrior" may be debated, it should be noted clearly that torpedoes make no distinction between black and gray hulls, nor do bullets as to the uniform worn.

– Retired Capt. Douglas A. Hard,
master mariner and professor emeritus,
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy,
Kings Point, N.Y.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE WELCOMES YOUR OPINIONS

Include your hometown and a daytime phone number for verification. All letters published are subject to editing. Due to the volume of mail received, not every letter can be acknowledged.

The American Legion Magazine, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206
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Better read this if you are 62 or older and still making mortgage payments.

It's a well-known fact that for many older Americans, the home is their single biggest asset, often accounting for more than 45% of their total net worth. *And with interest rates near all-time lows while home values are still high, this combination creates the perfect dynamic for getting the most out of your built-up equity.*

But, many aren't taking advantage of this unprecedented period. According to new statistics from the mortgage industry, senior homeowners in the U.S. are now sitting on more than 7.19 trillion dollars* of unused home equity.

Not only are people living longer than ever before, but there is also greater uncertainty in the economy. With home prices back up again, ignoring this "hidden wealth" may prove to be short sighted when looking for the best long-term outcome.

All things considered, it's not surprising that more than a million homeowners have already used a

government-insured Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) loan to turn their home equity into extra cash for retirement.

It's a fact: no monthly mortgage payments are required with a government-insured HECM loan; however the borrowers are still responsible for paying for the maintenance of their home, property taxes, homeowner's

It's times like these that your largest asset can be a life saver.

insurance and, if required, their HOA fees.

Today, HECM loans are simply an effective way for homeowners 62 and older to get the extra cash they need to enjoy retirement.

Although today's HECM loans have been improved to provide even greater financial protection for homeowners, there are still many misconceptions.

For example, a lot of people mistakenly believe the home must be paid off in full in order to qualify for a HECM loan, which is not the case. In fact, one key advantage of a HECM is that the proceeds will first be used to

pay off any existing liens on the property, which frees up cash flow, a huge blessing for seniors living on a fixed income. Unfortunately, many senior homeowners who might be better off with a HECM loan don't even bother to get more information because of rumors they've heard.

In fact, a recent survey by American Advisors Group (AAG), the nation's number one HECM lender, found that over 98% of their clients are satisfied with their loans. While these special loans are not for everyone, they can be a real lifesaver for senior homeowners - especially in times like these.

The cash from a HECM loan can be used for almost any purpose. Other common uses include making home improvements, paying off medical bills or helping other family members. Some people simply need the extra cash for everyday expenses while others are now using it as a safety net for financial emergencies.

If you're a homeowner age 62 or older, you owe it to yourself to learn more so that you can make the best decision - for your financial future.

NEW TIMES REQUIRE NEW THINKING

Homeowners who are interested in learning more can request a **FREE Reverse Mortgage Information Kit and DVD** by calling toll-free at

866-964-1084

As Featured on: **ABC, CBS, CNN & Fox News**



USA's #1 Reverse Mortgage Company

*Source: <https://reversemortgagedaily.com/2019/12/17/senior-housing-wealth-reaches-record-high-of-7-19-trillion>

Reverse mortgage loan terms include occupying the home as your primary residence, maintaining the home, paying property taxes and homeowners insurance. Although these costs may be substantial, AAG does not establish an escrow account for these payments. However, a set-aside account can be set up for taxes and insurance, and in some cases may be required. Not all interest on a reverse mortgage is tax-deductible and to the extent that it is, such deduction is not available until the loan is partially or fully repaid.

AAG charges an origination fee, mortgage insurance premium (where required by HUD), closing costs and servicing fees, rolled into the balance of the loan. AAG charges interest on the balance, which grows over time. When the last borrower or eligible non-borrowing spouse dies, sells the home, permanently moves out, or fails to comply with the loan terms, the loan becomes due and payable (and the property may become subject to foreclosure). When this happens, some or all of the equity in the property no longer belongs to the borrowers, who may need to sell the home or otherwise repay the loan balance. V2020.10.03

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Maintain tough approach to China

Today, we are not at war with China, but we are certainly at odds. The American Legion hopes the new administration in Washington continues the get-tough approach practiced by the United States toward the People's Republic of China (PRC) in recent years.

Rarely have I received a strategic briefing from U.S. military officials in which the topic of China's aggression has not come up. From building artificial islands to provocations in the Pacific, Beijing's actions concern not just the United States but our allies as well.

In 2019, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen told me the best way to ensure peace and stability in the region is to maintain strong Taiwan-U.S. relations, "so that together, we can defend democracy and freedom." She's correct, but that is not all we should do to deter China. The White House and Congress must continue funding our armed forces at a level to not only counterbalance but prevail over the world's largest military.

In its 2020 report to Congress, the Office of the Secretary of Defense stated that China has already achieved parity with, or even exceeded, the United States in several areas of military modernization, including shipbuilding, integrated air defense systems, and land-based conventional ballistic and cruise missiles.

Further, the report warned, the PRC's strategy is to achieve "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049, through "a determined pursuit of political and social modernity that includes far-ranging efforts to expand China's national power, perfect its governance systems and revise the international order." When we see the low regard the PRC has for its own citizens in Hong Kong, an "international order" that is revised to China's liking should terrify all freedom-loving people.

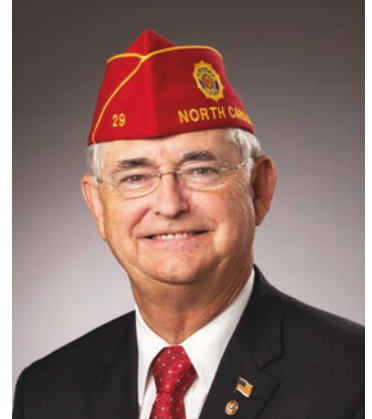
We've also seen how China's early mishandling of the coronavirus helped turn a regional outbreak into a global pandemic. While the World Health Organization was praising the PRC's response in June, its officials quietly complained that China's tight control of information led to deadly delays in the ability of the rest of the world to respond.

The American Legion is not an economic think tank, but it is a veterans organization committed to strengthening our nation. In this spirit, your National Executive Committee passed Resolution No. 13 last October. Titled "Support 'Buy American' Policy Within the Federal Government to Create Opportunities for Veterans," it states that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the weakness of the U.S. supply chain and stockpile of critical products. In addition, outsourcing manufacturing and raw material production has undermined America's national and economic security and left us dependent on foreign-made products.

Resolution 13 expresses The American Legion's support for laws that mandate all federal agencies to adopt and enforce a "buy American" policy in the procurement of goods and services to the highest extent possible. It also reiterates our support for legislation and policies that return overseas manufacturing to the United States.

In the darkest days of the Cold War, we fought for the best-case scenario by preparing for the worst-case scenario. China is preparing. Are we?

James W. "Bill" Oxford



National Commander
James W. "Bill" Oxford

MEMORANDA

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE GOES VIRTUAL

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the 2021 American Legion Washington Conference will be conducted virtually at the end of February and the beginning of March, from commission meetings to "storming the Hill," with members of the American Legion Family communicating with their representatives. National Commander Bill Oxford's testimony before Congress will be livestreamed.

Dates have not been finalized, but watch the national website for updates.

 legion.org/washingtonconference

LEGION BASEBALL HISTORY

American Legion World Series media specialist Richard Walker looks at the history of American Legion Baseball's regional playoff format in a four-part series. Highlights include how the format developed, some of the most successful players and teams in regional competition, and the advantage of regional hosts playing on their home fields.

 legion.org/baseball

A FOUNDATION OF **HOPE**

FOR DISABLED VETERANS



**I was about to give up...
I wouldn't have known where to go.**

*Korean War Army veteran Willie Alvin Cousin,
who received long-overdue and wrongly denied
VA disability benefits after his case was reopened
and won by American Legion Department
Service Officer K. Robert Lewis*

FOR MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES IN NEED



**These were important things.
It helped them not get behind
in their rent... It helped them
put food in the refrigerator.**

*Coast Guard Vice Commandant Adm. Charlie Ray
after American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance
helped more than 3,120 children whose active-duty families
were affected by the federal government shutdown*



Your gift provides hope for disabled veterans and children in need.

The American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation, formerly the American Legion Endowment Fund, delivers vital financial support for service officers worldwide who are working on VA disability claims for more than 700,000 U.S. military veterans at any one time, all the time. The fund also supplies American Legion Temporary Financial Assistance cash grants for military and veteran families with minor children at home, who have encountered hardships beyond their control and need short-term help covering the costs of shelter, food, utilities, clothing or other necessities.



**THE AMERICAN LEGION
VETERANS & CHILDREN FOUNDATION**

www.legion.org/donateVCF



\$118,500

A single-day Giving Tuesday fundraising record for The American Legion Dec. 1, propelled by a new alliance with Chip Ganassi Racing, whose IndyCar driver Jimmie Johnson will drive the 48 in 2021 and 2022 road races, displaying The American Legion emblem. IndyCar veteran Tony Kanaan will race the 48 on oval tracks in 2021. The American Legion raised \$17,000 on Giving Tuesday in 2019.

► 53

American Legion posts nationwide that earned \$150 or more in credit from American Legion Emblem Sales through Dec. 1 for participating in the national Flag Rewards Program. The program credits 10 cents for every \$1 spent to buy U.S.-made flags from Emblem Sales. Ankeny, Iowa, Post 42 led the way in 2020 through Dec. 1, with over \$1,200 in credit for flag purchases in its community.



► 440+

Pairs of children's pajamas collected in December by **the American Legion Family of Post and Unit 453 in Dallas**, with help from **Plano, Texas, Post 321**, for veterans to give as Christmas presents. "We want to make sure that any vet who cannot go shopping can at least have pajamas for their kids," Auxiliary Unit 453 member Donna Harrell said. "The pajamas are placed under each family's tree, a gift for the children from their parents, with no note from us."

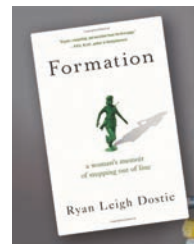


► 16,300+

American Legion Family-themed protective face coverings purchased through the end of November from Emblem Sales

"One of our goals when we started, and it was more on Facebook, was, 'How do we reach more women?' And we managed to push that. We've been hovering around 51, 52 percent women vs. men on our Facebook page."

Fargo, N.D., Post 2 member Amy Wieser Willson, who runs the Department of North Dakota social media program, on the department's online book club introduced in 2020 to engage members during the COVID-19 pandemic



► 7

Years since former Prineville, N.C., Post 337 American Legion Baseball alum Daniel Bard had pitched in the majors when he signed on to close for the Colorado Rockies in 2020. Bard went 4-2 with six saves and a 3.65 ERA on his way to being named the National League Comeback Player of the Year in December.

Colmery Act 2.0

On Dec. 7, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced the completion of American Legion-urged changes to expedite and update the Harry Colmery Educational Assistance Act of 2017, known as the "Forever GI Bill." The revised package of education benefits – named in honor of American Legion Past National Commander Harry W. Colmery, who was the chief architect of the 1944 GI Bill – includes:

- Removal of expiration of benefits for those who served on or after Jan. 1, 2013
- Changes in the way the Post-9/11 GI Bill Monthly Housing Allowance is calculated
- Expanded Yellow Ribbon Program eligibility to include Purple Heart recipients
- Establishment of the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship and improvements to the attendance verification process for scholarship recipients
- Proration of the entitlement charges for licensing, certifications and national exams for qualified veterans pursuing specialized career fields



"Advocating for wholesale insourcing of all products and decoupling our economy from the world is not an option. However, we must be honest and concede that as a nation, we are reliant on foreign-sourced products for our safety and protection from the spread of COVID-19. As a nation,

we must chart a new course to eliminate dependencies from foreign sources for some products that have national security and strategic importance."

National American Legion Veterans Employment & Education Division policy associate John Kamin, testifying Dec. 8 before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, on "Buy American" legislation that would set 50% as the minimum for goods purchased by the federal government from U.S. manufacturers. That portion of the testimony was delivered in support of Resolution No. 13, passed by The American Legion's National Executive Committee in October, "Support 'Buy American' Policy within the Federal Government to Create Opportunities for Veterans."

Virtual career fair on the calendar

The American Legion Veterans Employment & Education Commission and the American Legion Department of Texas are teaming up again Feb. 9 for a virtual career fair for veterans and their spouses. The online event runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Central time. Nearly 800 jobseekers from around the world participated in a virtual career fair Sept. 15, through which more than 225 veteran-hiring employers connected with applicants. Register online.

legion.org/careers/jobfairs



Photo by Jeric Wilhelmsen

"The Auxiliary – when we are inspired to do something – they are the backbone to getting it done. For that, we are truly grateful."

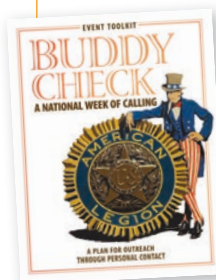
Monterey Park, Calif., Post 397 Commander Gabriel Suarez, following a Dec. 5 "pop-up" event that included a "Wonderland Drive-Thru" toy drive, food collection and support event for local businesses affected by COVID-19 restrictions who were able to set up their shops in pop-up tents for safe shopping in the post parking lot.

FROM NATIONAL TO YOU

Buddy Check kits address different needs

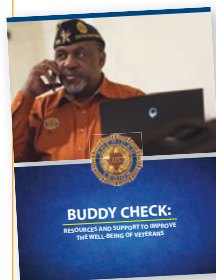
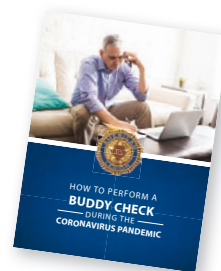
More than 3,600 American Legion posts reported that they had conducted Buddy Check operations by the end of the 2020 membership year. The program, launched in 2019 as a tool of engagement and camaraderie, grew in urgency during the COVID-19 pandemic.

National Headquarters offers three different guides to help posts conduct the program, each to address a specific need.



Buddy Check: A National Week of Calling was the first toolkit, providing general direction about how to reach members, former members and other veterans in local communities to see how they are doing and learn if the post can help them.

Buddy Check During the Coronavirus Pandemic was introduced in March 2020 to help volunteer callers learn how they can assist veterans and their families who might be isolated due to stay-at-home orders from public health officials.



Buddy Check to Improve the Well-Being of Veterans came out in November to offer guidance specific to emotional and mental health heading into the winter months as the pandemic continued to keep people home and socially distancing from others.

All three guides can be found at, and downloaded from, the national American Legion website.

legion.org/buddycheck/tools

Cut defense spending



SUPPORT

**Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva,
D-Ariz.**

■ Grijalva is chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

While some members of Congress rail against spending on social programs, infrastructure and other critical government services, these so-called fiscal conservatives vote for a bloated Pentagon budget. It's a vote to continue "forever wars" that have resulted in too many lives lost and money wasted while vital services remain underfunded for returning servicemembers.

Too many veterans are facing homelessness, unemployment, health problems and psychological trauma. It is unacceptable that after they have been asked to sacrifice their lives, our military men and women are callously neglected as they transition to civilian life – despite us having the money to care for them. Just five years ago, an internal defense budget report identified \$125 billion in waste. The Pentagon failed its first-ever agencywide audit in November 2018 and had almost 1,300 new failings in 2019. Instead of blindly approving a budget greater than all other discretionary spending combined, Congress should stop this waste. Overcharges from defense contractors, such as \$80 for a \$1.41 drainpipe and 4,000 percent profits, have become the norm. We must stop this price gouging.

Cuts to the State Department have severely inhibited our ability to conduct diplomacy that prevents violent conflict. By making diplomacy the pillar of our foreign policy and defense strategy, there will be less need to fund expensive wars that make us less safe, put our servicemembers in harm's way and drain our domestic budget. We can eliminate wasteful Pentagon spending, fund diplomacy, modernize for 21st-century threats, and take care of servicemembers and veterans.



OPPOSE

**Rep. Scott DesJarlais,
R-Tenn.**

■ DesJarlais is a member of the House Committee on Armed Services.

As a member of the House Committee on Armed Services, I am privileged each and every year to be tasked to help formulate the strategies, policies and funding necessary for America's men and women in uniform to retain their position as the best-trained and best-equipped military in the world.

The fiscal 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has bipartisan support, and includes \$740.5 billion in defense spending to maintain our nation's ability to address

concerns across the globe.

Activists nationwide have been pushing for cuts upwards of \$200 billion per year to our national security spending. I always welcome a healthy debate on the funding priorities of the Department of Defense, which like many other federal agencies requires vigorous oversight to ensure taxpayer funds are spent wisely. But significant cuts to U.S. military capabilities are frightening in a world full of threats – including an expansionist China, a Russia that is reviving many of its Cold War strategies, an aggressive Iran that continues to pursue nuclearization, an always unstable North Korea, and the perpetual danger posed by radical Islamic terrorist groups. All of these potential adversaries are spending more money on military operations and probing to find a perceived U.S. weakness.

Our military is an all-volunteer force that is the envy of the world. Freedom exists in this country and in many other corners of the world because of American know-how, commitment and strength. We should not and cannot retreat from a position that maintains our superiority. Our way of life depends upon it.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

Proponents of a large defense budget say it is essential to preserve

U.S. leadership on the world stage.

Others argue that some of that money would be better spent on diplomacy and domestic priorities.

CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

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HOME/ OFFICE

*Design matters
when creating a
home workspace.*

BY LANCE FRAZER



Fixabay

As more people shift to in-home offices, ergonomics experts believe too many are approaching their design the wrong way, risking significant health issues down the road.

"Dedicated space is critical," says Michelle Robertson, executive director for the Office Ergonomics Research Committee. "You need to have visual cues that say, 'This is my work area,' in order to reduce the mental strain of mixing a home and work environment."

Equipment is another factor, says Kermit Davis, an expert in office ergonomics at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. "You might be sent home to work on a laptop that isn't meant for long-term use. And then, where should I put it? Too often we see people working on a kitchen table, a folding table or some other surface that can lead over time to serious problems."



MOVE With extended sitting linked to an increased risk for diabetes, hypertension and abnormal cholesterol levels, Lisa Tucker – an architect and program chair for interior design at Virginia Tech – says movement is critical.

Besides helping the body process waste, movement can change the position of one's neck and body, as well as the perspective of one's vision, helping avoid blurry vision or dry, fatigued eyes, Tucker says. She recommends setting a timer as a reminder to move at least every half-hour.



SIT One of the biggest mistakes made is in chair selection. Instead of grabbing whatever's handy, invest in a high-quality chair.

Tucker stresses lumbar support, "and you want it adjustable to a height where you're not putting strain on your neck by continually looking up or down."

Davis suggests a chair with a waterfall front, so there's no hard surface to impact one's thighs. As for armrests, which are important for preventing back strain, they "should be

padded to prevent contact stress, and you don't want the seat to be too deep for you to reach the back or for your feet to reach the floor."

Adjust the chair or keyboard to keep your forearms, wrists and hands in a straight line, and avoid resting wrists on the hard edge of the desk to reduce strain.



MONITOR A computer monitor should be at eye level and 20 to 40 inches directly in front of you. For a laptop, Davis is a big fan of an external keyboard and mouse. "If you raise your monitor to reduce neck and back strain, you can get to a height where the keyboard is uncomfortable to use because of the position in which it puts your arms," he says.



LIGHTING Proper lighting is critical for health. Don't position a bright light right behind you, as it can trigger glare on the monitor and cause eye strain and difficulty in focusing, Robertson says. She warns that poor lighting "can also make you lean into your computer to try to see the screen, which can trigger back and shoulder problems."

OTHER THOUGHTS Robertson adds that it's easier to prevent physical problems through proper design than to have to go back and fix things.

"We're (now) seeing people who have been working at home since mid-March (2020) who didn't set up their space properly, and they're just now beginning to feel symptoms in the back, shoulders, wrists, eyes," she says. "These problems can take a long time to fix, so it's vital to start out right."

Lance Frazer is a California-based freelance writer specializing in health and medicine, science, nature and the environment.



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COVID's toll on mental health

COVID-related isolation has led to sharp increases in loneliness, anxiety, depression and substance use among young Americans. According to research conducted by the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, nearly half of Americans 18 to 35 surveyed reported high levels of loneliness, 80 percent significant symptoms of depression, 45 percent moderate levels of anxiety and 17 percent severe anxiety. Overall, respondents reported a 53 percent increase in lack-of-connectedness.

These mental-health issues are triggering higher levels of substance abuse, with 38 percent of respondents reporting severe drug use, 30 percent "harmful levels" of drinking and 22 percent saying they have used drugs during the pandemic. The study also shows a 48 percent increase in alcohol use and a 44 percent increase in drug use among the 18-to-35 age group.

"These young adults are the future of our nation's social fabric," says Viviana Horigian, a professor at the University of Miami and the study's lead author. "They need to be given access to psychological help, coupled with the development and dissemination of brief online contact-based interventions that encourage healthy lifestyles."

Go to [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) for crisis hotline numbers to help people dealing with anxiety, stress, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, domestic violence and related challenges.



Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.



'Trigger thumb'

Studies show that the average person spends about 23 hours a week texting, which can lead to painful and, in some cases, long-term joint issues. The good news is that many of these conditions are highly treatable, according to physicians at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

One of the most common joint issues caused by texting, gaming and emailing is "trigger thumb," which is the constriction of a flexor tendon in the thumb "from repetitive gripping motions such as texting or holding a smartphone." Symptoms of trigger thumb include painful popping or snapping when the thumb bends and straightens. The thumb might even lock in a curled position.

Rush experts report that cortisone injections eliminate pain and restore full mobility "80 to 85 percent of the time. In more severe cases, a brief surgical procedure may be required to release the pulley at the base of the thumb so the tendon can move more easily."

Robert Wysocki, a hand, wrist and elbow surgeon at Rush, recommends that those suffering trigger-thumb symptoms change how they use their cellphones. "For example, hold your phone with the hand you use less frequently, or type messages with your index finger to give your thumbs a rest," he says.

Another condition physicians are seeing more is thumb arthritis, or "texting thumb," caused by repeated forceful pinching motions, such as gripping one's phone or texting with thumbs.

According to Rush experts, the best course of care is a combination of rest and focused treatments on the area where the thumb connects to the wrist. These might include splints, cortisone shots and, in serious cases, a surgical procedure known as a thumb carpometacarpal arthroplasty, which involves removal of part or all of a specific bone in the thumb-joint-wrist area.

To avoid or lessen these cellphone side effects, Rush physicians make these recommendations:

- Give your thumbs a rest by using your forefinger to text or by using the voice-texting features available on many phones.
- Stretch your wrists, hands, fingers and thumbs by opening and closing your fingers throughout the day to keep your tendons nimble, and by rotating your wrists in circles occasionally during the day.
- Call rather than text or email.
- Track your phone usage and consider how to cut back on unnecessary texts and emails.

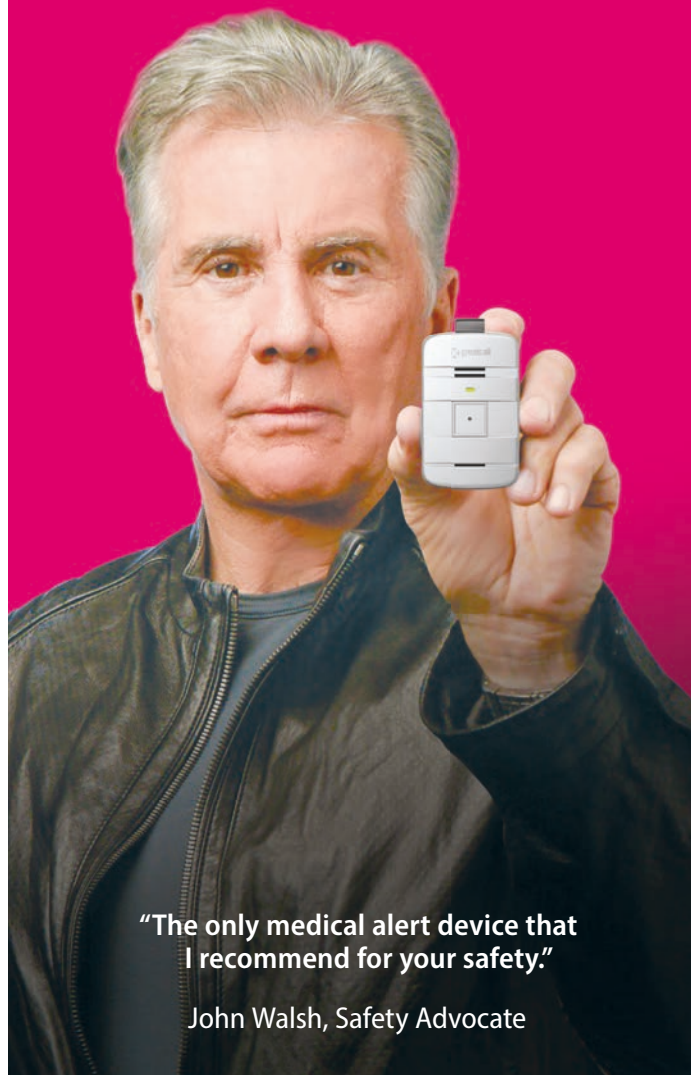
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Photo courtesy Alcatraz East Crime Museum



Photo courtesy Explore Minnesota



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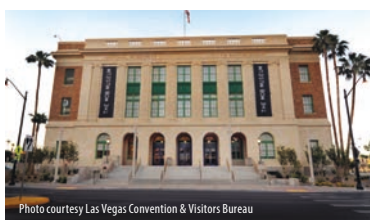
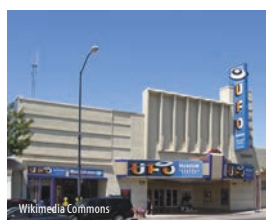


Photo courtesy Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Bureau



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5 UNUSUAL AMERICAN MUSEUMS

These one-of-a-kind stops are anything but boring.

BY LYN METTLER

Seen more art museums than you care to count? Looking for something more off the wall? Check out these quirky museums dedicated to everything from SPAM to UFOs, located across the United States. (Just check their hours and COVID-19 protocols before you go.)

Mob Museum, Las Vegas Officially called the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, the Mob Museum chronicles the birth and evolution of organized crime in the United States, as well as federal efforts to control and eliminate it. Exhibits include Prohibition, the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, the FBI, and famous figures such as Al Capone, Eliot Ness and J. Edgar Hoover. Visitors can listen to actual wiretaps, explore a forensics lab, and tour a speakeasy and on-site distillery. Ticket prices start at \$29.95.

themobmuseum.org

SPAM Museum, Austin, Minn. This free museum celebrates the canned precooked meat that became a staple for U.S. troops during World War II. Visitors learn about the history of the Hormel brand and its worldwide popularity through interactive displays, videos and hands-on activities, and can sample bits of SPAM offered by volunteer guides called "Spambassadors." There's even a gift shop that sells SPAM cookbooks, \$3 cans of exotic flavors and more. spam.com/museum

International UFO Museum, Roswell, N.M. As the site of a mysterious crash in 1947, Roswell is an ideal location for this museum, which collects

material and information related to the infamous "Roswell incident," as well as other UFO history, science and research. Visitors can also pick up fun souvenirs at a gift shop. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for U.S. military and first responders.

roswellufomuseum.com

International Banana Museum, Mecca, Calif.

Love bananas? Add this museum, about an hour south of Palm Springs, to your sightseeing list. Inside are more than 25,000 items related to the popular yellow fruit, as well as a banana bar, which serves up all kinds of banana treats, including frozen bananas, banana milkshakes and banana bread. Plus, it's only \$1 for admission.

internationalbananamuseum.com

Alcatraz East Crime Museum, Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Designed to look like a prison with guard towers inspired by San Francisco's Alcatraz lighthouse, the Alcatraz East Crime Museum has five galleries that focus on crime history, punishment, crime scene investigation (CSI), crime fighting, and counterfeit crimes and pop culture. A getaway exhibit includes John Dillinger's car, the white Ford Bronco from the O.J. Simpson chase and Ted Bundy's Volkswagen Beetle. Kids will learn a lot, too, from standing in a police lineup to taking a lie-detector test. Tickets are \$26.95 for adults, and \$19.95 for law enforcement and U.S. military.

alcatrazeast.com

Lyn Mettler is a freelance travel writer who blogs at gototravelgal.com.

With cleanliness topping the list for U.S. travelers deciding where to go and stay, InsureMyTrip has released a list of the [top 10 cleanest U.S. cities](#). Leading the pack are three California cities – Long Beach, San Diego and Sacramento – with Philadelphia ranking as the least clean.

The [National Museum of the U.S. Air Force](#) in Dayton, Ohio, will open a new "Women in the Air Force: From Yesterday into Tomorrow" exhibit early this year, featuring more than 60 new artifacts and covering historical issues, changes in laws and attitudes, and women's contributions to the Air Force mission.



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AMERICA REMEMBERS PRESENTS

The Vietnam Veterans Tribute Thompson

HONORING ALL THOSE WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM

Our men and women came from all over the country, from all walks of life, to fight for freedom on the other side of the world. They served with honor, dignity, and courage. All gave some, some gave all, and many are still missing and unaccounted for. As a nation, we owe all of our Vietnam Veterans a debt that can never be repaid.

Nothing about the Vietnam War was easy. Those who were there remember the swampy grasslands, rice paddies, dense jungles, the heat and an elusive enemy; a war that took place halfway around the world in a country divided by decades of bitter history.

Few generations faced a more daunting challenge than those who fought in Southeast Asia. Few generations are more deserving of our gratitude and respect. To honor all those who served in Vietnam, America Remembers presents the **Vietnam Veterans Tribute Thompson**. Craftsmen commissioned specifically for this project by America Remembers decorate each Thompson in elegant 24-karat gold artwork on a mirror-polished nickel-decorated receiver. Issued in an exclusive limited edition of only 1,000 Tributes, this handsome firearm captures the courage and sacrifice of all those who fought for freedom in Vietnam.

The Tribute is a working semi-automatic Thompson submachine gun in caliber .45 ACP, one of the most memorable American infantry weapons of all time. Like many dedicated Americans, the Thompson served proudly in Vietnam. We've taken this combat-tested classic and transformed it into a work of art. The result is a stunning presentation firearm that will stand as a testament and lasting Tribute to all Vietnam veterans.

The Thompson: An American Original

Vietnam was considered the "last great war" for the Tommy Gun. Though it saw less use than in previous wars, it was a popular weapon for American and South Vietnamese soldiers. The Thompson was a "warhorse" which was relied on for its superior stopping power and dependability.

Like the dedicated American warriors who served in Vietnam, the Thompson served proudly in Vietnam, continuing a tradition of excellence first established during WWII, and later in Korea. This stunning presentation firearm is a lasting tribute to all of America's veterans and links them forever in time with their brothers-in-arms who fought earlier wars.

We know there will never be another American-made firearm like the Thompson submachine gun.

And there will never be more dedicated men and women than those who bravely served their country in Vietnam.

Much like the generations of warriors who came before, those who served with valor in Vietnam deserve their place in American history.

They didn't hesitate to put their lives on the line and give up everything in defense of our liberty and freedom. Some made the ultimate sacrifice. Others returned home to a divided nation. All of them deserve our gratitude.

During the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, there has been a strong interest in firearm Tributes honoring those who served in Vietnam. Demand for this Tribute is expected to be strong. Order now to guarantee your place in the edition. We will arrange delivery through the licensed firearms dealer of your choice (not available in CA, CT, MD, NY). If for any reason you are not completely satisfied with your Tribute, you may return it in original, unfired condition within 30 days for a complete and courteous refund.

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▼ Both sides of the receiver feature emblems that honor Vietnam War veterans. The banner reads: "A Grateful Nation Remembers," and inside the oval is a lone American soldier, the distinctive silhouette of Vietnam and a pair of U.S. military helicopters. The emblem on the right side is framed with a banner reading: "Vietnam Veterans Tribute Thompson".

▼ Left side of the receiver features a soldier with his M60 machine gun--nicknamed "The Pig" for its hefty size. The M60 unleashed a fury of firepower on the enemy. Also featured is a M48-A3 Patton tank providing cover as troops enter a village. The M48 was a workhorse during the Vietnam War.

▲ Right side also features a soldier scanning the distance for enemy movement. A pair of M48 tanks make their way on the ground while the sky is abuzz with helicopters, which played such an important role during the Vietnam War. On the far end of the receiver, you'll find a Marine and his M16. Along with the Huey, the legendary M16 has become a symbol of combat service in Vietnam. Introduced to the battlefield in 1964, the M16 was a lightweight assault rifle that proved invaluable in jungle firefights. Right side features an image of the iconic Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal presented by Republic of Vietnam to members of the United States military who completed at least six months of duty in the war, with a frame reading: "Vietnam War - All Gave Some, Some Gave All." Below it you'll find a banner that reads: "Lest We Forget."

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A Famous Man



Famous Lane was a quiet soldier until the time came to act in Vietnam. Illustration by Matt Hall

From mess cook to machine gunner, he quietly did his job, ignoring the taunts of soldiers he saved.

BY KEITH NIGHTINGALE

“Famous” is a common word with many applications. It can refer to a person, event, place or thing. Or it can simply be the name of someone who exemplifies all of that. Such a man was Pfc. Famous Lee Lane of Poplar Bluff, Mo. Famous became truly famous on April 20, 1966, in Binh Thuan province, South Vietnam.

His name is inscribed on Panel 06E, Row 124 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. But that is not why he was – and is – famous to those of us who knew him.

I was first introduced to Famous Lane when I joined the 2-505/82nd Airborne in 1965.

Famous was a cook in the battalion mess. The unit deployed to the Dominican Republic as part of Operation Power Pack, and Famous first became famous there. Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) Mess had several .50 cal's as part of its MTOE (Modification Table of Organization and Equipment). The weapon simply outweighed many in the mess, so Famous naturally assumed responsibility for its care, cleaning and use.

Famous was known at this time as a quiet, large man with an infectious smile. He seldom spoke but just went on with his work and that of others, without fanfare. He was the

ultimate silent soldier in an organization where the voices and noises of combat were constant conditions.

Within a day after deployment, Famous took his .50 cal to the rooftop of the recently captured building occupied by HHC, 2-505. Soon, several aircraft of the rebel Dom Rep forces proceeded to strafe the troops. On the roof with Famous was a staff sergeant named Engle, of the anti-tank platoon. Engle was an ex-Wehrmacht soldier who had joined the 505 as a pathway to U.S. citizenship when the regiment was stationed in Germany.

Engle informed Famous that the planes were not going to hit them; he had significant experience against U.S. aircraft from previous combat experience. And if you could see wings wider than the leading



edge, the bullets would pass beyond.

Famous then stood behind the .50 and engaged the aircraft with an experienced bird hunter's lead. One of the two aircraft was quickly hit, began burning and crashed. The other plane fled.

The rest of that deployment was pretty uneventful for Famous. But, within the 2-505, Famous became more and more famous for his successful shootdown of an enemy aircraft. That, however, did not change his demeanor or work ethic in any way.

At a later time, while we were both at Fort Bragg, I asked him with the usual naïve ignorance of a second lieutenant, "Why did your mother name you Famous?"

He looked at me and said in a quiet, patient voice, "She thought that would help me out." End of discussion. Soon, Famous left the

82nd and joined the leading elements of the 101st Airborne Division, now deployed to Vietnam.

Assigned to the mess again, as his stated military specialty, Famous found there was no real mess in deployed field units. Instead, he went to his NCO and asked to be assigned to a machine gun with the infantry.

The NCO took him to the HHC commander, who then asked his friend, the commanding officer of A/2-502, if he could use a large man who wanted to be a machine gunner. The assignment was made.

Famous joined the unit and quickly stood out for three primary reasons:

- He wanted to be there, when he could have stayed in the rear.
- He towered over most of the infantry.
- He was very focused and never complained; in fact, he rarely spoke. He just carried his weapon and did his job.

Few really knew him. He didn't converse much with others. And there were few fellow Black soldiers in his unit, predominantly composed of whites from the Deep South with prejudices and characteristics commonly associated with that environment at the time. (They were also the core of the life professionals and thoroughly competent in their work.)

Within the group, two young soldiers took it upon themselves to occasionally make fun of Famous or to ridicule him with others. Famous, fully aware, said nothing and went about his work.

On a hot April morning, Company A found itself looking across a large green rice paddy toward a brushy jungled area just beyond. Suddenly, shots rang out, and the troops went into

immediate battle drill, dropping behind the dikes and returning fire. Gunships and artillery began to work the brush-hidden enemy positions. Famous quickly had his M60 working in support.

Suddenly he stopped firing, raised up from his position and looked to his direct front at two crumpled soldiers – two young troops who had often slighted him. This day, they were walking point and had triggered the initial confrontation. Both were wounded and lying on the open paddy, truly in no man's land. Famous could clearly see who they were – and how they were.

Without guidance or an order, Famous jumped up and began running straight to the pair, through continuous fire. He reached them and grabbed each under an arm – as if they were footballs – and began running back to the friendly position.

His size had alerted the enemy. He was a big, conspicuous target. And his machine gun, unmanned, was of no use.

As Famous made his final sprint into friendly lines with the two wounded men, he was hit by several bullets and killed on the spot. For this action, Famous Lee Lane was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

I will always remember him for being who and what he was, the truest definition of Famous, who needed no one's help to make an eternal name for himself. 🌿

Keith Nightingale is a retired Army colonel, two-tour Vietnam War combat veteran and former assault commander in Grenada. He managed the Department of Defense's Counterdrug Task Force in Latin America, from Panama. In July 2020, he was inducted into the 82nd Airborne Division Hall of Fame.

STILL GREAT

From culture to economics to peacekeeping, Britain's role in the world is far from diminishing.

BY ALAN W. DOWD



With its bitter, drawn-out divorce from the European Union now complete, there's been much debate over whether Great Britain is still, well, great. Critics of Britain's EU exit (commonly called "Brexit") worry that a Britain cut off from the EU will have a diminished role in the world, while Brexit supporters believe a Britain independent of the EU's bureaucracy will be more vibrant and more "global," in the words of Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Which side is right?

MEASURING STICK Most European nations view the EU as a way to magnify their statures in an era marked by diminishing demographic, political and economic clout relative to the United States, China and India. But in recent years, a majority of Britons came to view the EU as a fetter on British sovereignty and a drain on British power. Johnson argues Britain had "become infantilized" by the "nanny in Brussels" – a reference to EU headquarters.

Johnson sees post-Brexit Britain as "outward-looking," "engaged with the world" and unapologetically pro-American. "I say to all the naïve and juvenile anti-Americans in this country," he recently jabbed, "grow up and get a grip."

For Johnson and other Brexit supporters, a Britain outside the EU will be free to reassert its sovereignty and renew its role as a global force. "We will rediscover muscles that we have not used for decades," Johnson cheered as Britain parted ways with the EU.

To be sure, Britain is not the empire it was a century ago, and Johnson has no plans to rebuild the British Empire. However, Britain was a great power before it joined the Common Market, before the European Community tried to turn itself into a United States of Europe, and before the EU adopted a flag, a currency, a *faux* foreign minister and a smothering 271-page quasi-constitution. And Britain will remain a great power now that it has parted ways with the EU.

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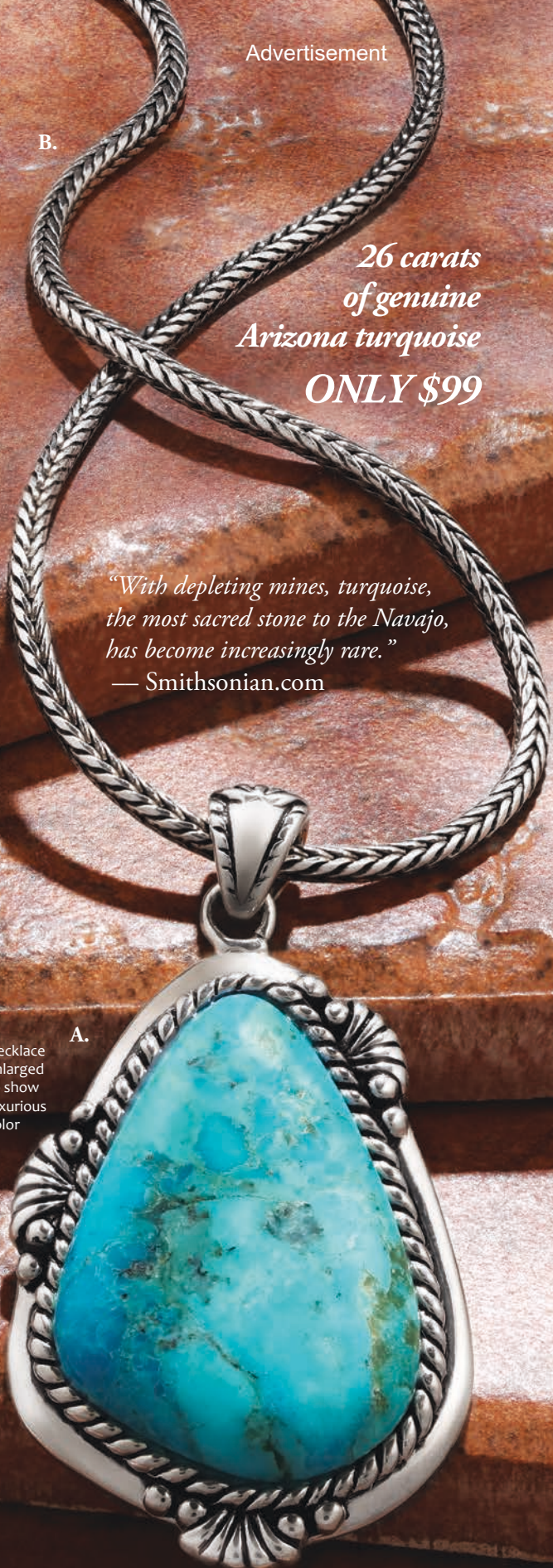
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Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters wave the Union Jack during a mass march Jan. 1, 2020. In response to China's push to impose national security legislation in the former British colony, Great Britain offered a route to citizenship to more than 3 million people living there. Getty

Consider some of the key measures of geopolitical power:

- **Economics** Britain's population ranks 22nd in the world. Yet Britain boasts the world's ninth-largest economy, ranks 10th in exports, is home to 17 of the richest companies, and serves as the world's main financial and banking hub. In fact, Britain is the world's leading foreign-exchange market, with almost double the financial services exports of the United States.

- **Military strength** Britain invests \$60.76 billion on defense – the second-highest amount in NATO. Owing to its investment in defense – and close integration with the United States in defense and intelligence – Britain has one of the world's most advanced militaries. As U.K. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace puts it, Britain is “the only Day 1, Tier 1 partner capable of fighting alongside the U.S. in the most contested environments.”

When it comes to projecting power, Britain is one of just six nations with an operational, full-fledged aircraft carrier – not an amphibious landing ship or helicopter carrier. Britain boasts two of the maritime behemoths, and both are brand-new. Moreover, Britain is one of just eight nations that (officially) possesses nuclear weapons. In fact, Britain expanded its nuclear arsenal last year.

- **Culture** Ever since British ships first set sail for faraway lands, Britain has had an outsized influence on culture around the world. Indeed, from high art and pop culture to governance, language and economics, Britain is a cultural superpower.

Britain's fingerprints are visible wherever there is the rule of law, constitutional-parliamentary government and liberal economics. Many of Britain's former colonies remain part of what's called the British Commonwealth – a voluntary association of 54 independent states and 2.4 billion people stretching from Australia to Grenada to Zambia committed to “the development of free and democratic societies and the promotion of peace and prosperity.”

English is the world's *lingua franca*. EU institutions conduct almost all of their business in English.

Britain is the home of Shakespeare, Dickens and Austen, Lewis and Tolkien, Adele, the Beatles and Handel (he penned “Messiah” after becoming a British subject). And most Americans are unaware that some of our favorite TV shows – “The Office,” “House of Cards,” “Veep,” even what we call “American Idol” – were imported from Britain.

- **Science and discovery** Three of the top 10 universities in the world are found in Britain, including top-ranked Oxford. Britain boasts the second-largest fraternity of Nobel laureates, behind the United States – even though Britain has a smaller population than Germany, France, Japan or Russia, all of which trail the U.K.

Given this wellspring of knowledge, it's no surprise that Brits are on the leading edge of the fight against COVID-19. The British firm Synairgen has developed an effective antiviral treatment. And the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is effective, inexpensive, and easier to store and transport than



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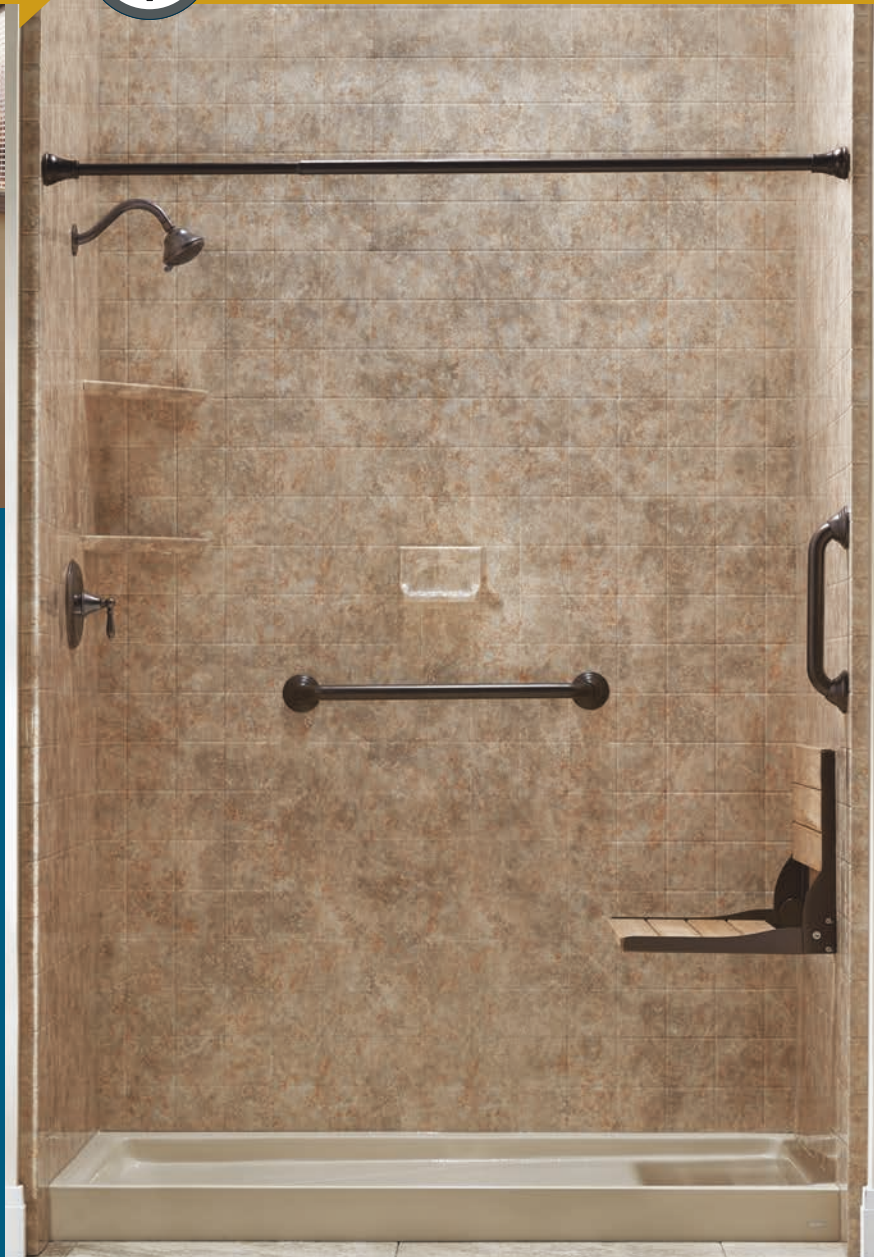


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An F-35B Lightning II aircraft from the F-35 Integrated Test Force (ITF) practices landing on HMS Queen Elizabeth. U.S. Navy photo by Liz Wolter

other COVID-19 vaccines, which must be kept at -94° Fahrenheit. The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine can be stored in a typical refrigerator.

■ **Diplomacy** In response to Beijing’s rollback of Hong Kong’s special independent status, Britain offered 3 million Hong Kong residents a pathway to British citizenship. Following Britain’s lead, a bipartisan group of U.S. senators is urging the State Department to give Hong Kongers special refugee status. It’s no wonder Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement flies the Union Jack (and Old Glory).

In response to Beijing’s mishandling of COVID-19, Johnson – himself a COVID-19 survivor – scrapped plans to allow PRC-backed Huawei to build Britain’s 5G telecommunications network. Instead, Britain is calling on the D10 – a partnership of 10 democracies enfolded the G7, Australia, South Korea and India – to pool their technological resources and harness their interoperability to create an uncompromised 5G network.

British members of Parliament played a lead role in organizing the new Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC). Comprising senior lawmakers from Britain, the United States and other democracies, IPAC is helping its members coordinate responses to Beijing’s assault on human rights and international security.

MULTIPLICATION Britain’s special relationship with the United States magnifies Britain’s role in the world. It also serves U.S. interests by serving as a force multiplier for U.S. power.

The freshest piece of evidence pointing toward Britain’s role as a great power is HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, Britain’s newest aircraft carrier. The

massive warship – the largest ever deployed by Britain – is conducting sea trials and will be combat-operational in 2021. A second carrier, HMS *Prince of Wales*, will be combat-operational in 2023. Each ship carries 36 F-35 stealth fighter-bombers.

Queen Elizabeth will deploy both British and American F-35s – an unprecedented level of integration, according to British Fleet Commander Vice Adm. Jerry Kyd. In fact, the first plane to land on *Queen Elizabeth* was an American F-35. This is not a short-term arrangement. British officials revealed in 2015 that the United States and the U.K. plan “to fly aircraft from each other’s ships.” That’s just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the U.S.-U.K. alliance.

■ To keep British naval aviators proficient as their new carriers were built, the United States allowed its closest ally to deploy personnel on American carriers for flight operations and training.

■ Some 9,300 U.S. troops are stationed in Britain, scores of U.S. Coast Guardsmen have served with the Royal Navy since 2014, and 750 British personnel are stationed in America. The Royal Air Force (RAF) has a special unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV) unit at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada. British submarines dock at the U.S. base in Kings Bay, Ga. Likewise, Britain allows the U.S. military to maintain bases on the British territory of Diego Garcia, and a number of U.S. assets nest at facilities in the U.K.

■ Britain and the United States recently formed Team Artemis, a unit of military personnel from both nations charged with deploying a constellation of low-earth-orbit satellites that relay data to allied warplanes.

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■ “Every major in the British Army spends two weeks at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College,” reports British Army Brigadier James Carr-Smith. A program approved by both armies commits “a U.K. division to operate effectively within a U.S. corps and a U.K. brigade to operate effectively within a U.S. division, and to enable a U.S. brigade combat team to operate effectively within a U.K. division.”

■ Similarly, Britain plans for its carriers to serve in a combined U.S.-U.K. carrier strike group, according to Adm. Tony Radakin, Royal Navy chief of staff. Kyd adds, “We’re not talking about interoperability ... we’re talking about proper integration to a level we’ve never seen.”

This integration is the culmination of what began during World War II, when British troops served under American command, and Americans under British command. Indeed, when Winston Churchill coined the phrase “special relationship” to describe the U.S.-U.K. alliance, he envisioned “common study of potential dangers,” “similarity of weapons,” “the interchange of officers,” “intimate relationship between our military advisers,” and “joint use of all naval and Air Force bases.”

Ever the visionary, Churchill understood that America and Britain “will have to be somewhat mixed up together in some of their affairs.” Somewhere, Churchill is smiling.

GREAT AND GOOD Wallace describes the British armed forces as “the spear of Global Britain.” Great Britain is brandishing that spear in most of the world’s hotspots.

■ **Ensuring freedom of the seas** *Queen Elizabeth’s* maiden deployment will be to the Pacific. This is tangible evidence of Britain’s crucial role as a force multiplier, especially as the U.S. Navy strains to maintain a presence everywhere it’s needed, from the South China Sea and North Atlantic to the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf.

To answer Beijing’s illegal island-building activities in the South China Sea, British and U.S. warships have teamed up for joint maneuvers in the vital international waterway. British forces also have joined the United States, Japan and France for military exercises around Guam and Tinian.

The Royal Navy is a key part of Combine Task Force 150, the multinational maritime component of the war on terrorism that conducts operations in the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the northern Indian Ocean. Britain has contributed to Combined Task Force 151, which is focused on counterpiracy off the Horn

of Africa. Britain also contributes to Combined Task Force 152, which focuses on maritime security in the Arabian Gulf.

Britain and the United States partnered in 2019 to form a 10-nation maritime coalition to protect the Persian Gulf against Iranian piracy. The Royal Navy took command of the armada in 2020. And Britain recently opened a naval base in Bahrain, which serves as headquarters for the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet.

■ **Defending NATO** Britain commands and hosts NATO’s Rapid Reaction Corps, which coordinates thousands of personnel from 23 nations. A British task force leads NATO’s forward-deployed battlegroup in Estonia. The RAF is a lead member of NATO’s Baltic Air Policing Mission. A British brigade is assigned to NATO’s 10,000-man Joint Expeditionary Force, which is focused on security in the North Atlantic, Arctic and Baltics.

In May, after countless Russian incursions into NATO airspace and seaspace, the Royal Navy joined the U.S. Navy in a show of force in Moscow’s backyard, as a flotilla of surface ships sailed into the Barents Sea for the first time since the Cold War. And Britain has trained more than 9,500 Ukrainian military personnel. Although Ukraine is not a NATO member, it is under assault from NATO’s main adversary.

■ **Fighting jihadists** On the terrorism front, Britain was one of just seven countries to join the United States in conducting airstrikes against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Britain conducted the second-largest share of airstrikes against ISIS, after the United States. And Britain was one of an even smaller handful of countries to deploy ground troops for kinetic operations. At least three British personnel have been killed fighting ISIS in Iraq and Syria, most recently in March.

Britain has stood with the United States in Afghanistan from the beginning of the war on terrorism. About 1,000 British troops remain in Afghanistan (down from a high of 10,000). Some 450 British troops have died in Afghanistan, and 179 died fighting Saddam Hussein’s terrorist tyranny in Iraq. None of America’s other allies have sacrificed more.

Virtually everywhere U.S. personnel are in harm’s way, there are British personnel fighting, marching, sailing and flying alongside them. In short, Britain is not only a great power – Britain is a good friend. 🌿

Alan W. Dowd is a senior fellow with the Sagamore Institute Center for America’s Purpose.

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Maj. Charity Adams inspects her troops in Birmingham, England, in 1945. National Archives

THE SIX TRIPLE EIGHT

The only battalion of African-American women sent overseas during World War II made quick work of a massive mail backlog, boosting troop morale.

BY MATT GRILLS

As Allied forces swept across Europe in early 1945, mail for U.S. troops wasn't going anywhere. Inside warehouses in Birmingham, England, letters and packages piled up nearly to the ceilings, with thousands more flooding in every day. A shortage of qualified postal officers, the challenge of delivering mail to servicemembers constantly on the move, and sheer volume – some 7 million Americans were serving in theater – had resulted in a colossal logjam.

The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion arrived in February, commanded by Maj. Charity Adams. Aware of the power of letters to lift the spirits of homesick GIs, the women worked around the clock, in three eight-hour shifts; “no mail, low morale” was their motto. They developed cards to track individual servicemembers, using serial numbers to distinguish those with the same name (including some 7,500 Robert Smiths, according to records). Soon they were processing over 65,000 pieces of mail per shift – redirecting those marked “undeliverable,” identifying the correct recipients of wrongly addressed mail, and returning letters and packages to families of the fallen.

The first and only African-American Women's Army Corps (WAC) battalion deployed overseas during World War II, the “Six Triple Eight” needed only three months to clear a backlog that one general estimated would take six. It then went to Rouen, France, where the women again got the mail moving in half the time given.

“They did their job with dignity and respect, with dedication and commitment, even though they were faced daily with prejudices,” says Elizabeth Helm-Frazier, a retired Army master sergeant and member of American Legion Post 136 in Greenbelt, Md.

“They didn't ask for pity. They had volunteered to come into the Army and serve their country when their country really did not serve them, knowing that when they got out they would go back to a country that discriminated against them because of their race. They didn't get a parade. They didn't get an award. There was no ‘Thank you for your service.’ But it did not despair them.”

Like most of the greatest generation, the women of the 6888th returned to the United States, bought train tickets home and talked little about the war, satisfied they had done their part.

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U.S. Ambassador to the UK Robert Wood Johnson, center, presents a plaque to Acting Chief Master Keith Phillips at King Edward's School in Birmingham, where the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion was stationed during World War II. Also pictured, from left, are "Six Triple Eight" director Jim Theres, producer Edna Cummings, 6888th supporter Clara Adams-Ender, producer Elizabeth Helm-Frazier and associate producer Garry Stewart. Photo courtesy David Ash Photography

PIONEER PATRIOTS Seventy-five years later, the Six Triple Eight is receiving new attention, as the subject of an award-winning documentary and legislation that would give the battalion the Congressional Gold Medal.

"They took their job very seriously, and they were fantastic at it, ultimately delivering 17 million pieces of mail in about eight months," says Jim Theres, writer, director and executive producer of "The Six Triple Eight," and a member of American Legion Post 534 in McFarland, Wis.

While promoting his second film – "The Hello Girls," about the women who worked as Signal Corps switchboard operators in World War I – Theres was asked if he'd heard of the Six Triple Eight. Unfamiliar with the unit, he did some research and became eager to tell its story.

In late 2018, Theres interviewed five of the battalion's few living members at the dedication of a memorial to the 6888th at Buffalo Soldier Monument Park in Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Helm-Frazier and retired Army Col. Edna Cummings, who helped raise funds to build the memorial and knew the veterans, signed on as producers.

Nearly 6,500 African-American women served on active duty during World War II. Of that number, 855 – 31 officers and 824 enlisted – formed the Six Triple Eight.

"They were trailblazers," Cummings says. "I call them 'pioneer patriots.' They put patriotism above everything else and saw military service as an opportunity to contribute to the war effort."

Theres' film traces the battalion's roots to civil-rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune's and first lady Eleanor Roosevelt's campaign to admit African-American women to the WAC. When units of white women deployed overseas, African-American organizations asked for the same opportunity, and in 1944 the War Department finally agreed.

Members of the Six Triple Eight trained at Fort Oglethorpe, Ga., jumping trenches in gas masks, marching with rucksacks, and learning to identify enemy ships and aircraft. On Feb. 3, 1945, the first contingent sailed on the *Ile de France*. A second group followed nearly two months later.

"On the way over, because this is wartime, we were chased by a submarine, and we had to shoot out," Delores Ruddock, 97, recalls in the film. In Glasgow, a German V1 rocket exploded near the pier, sending them running for cover.

When the women arrived in Birmingham, "that was another life really," says Ruddock, who worked day shift. Together, they sorted mail in cold, dim warehouses where rats nibbled packages of spoiled food. To stay warm, they wore long johns and extra layers of clothes under their coats.

And they knew they were being watched, closely. When a general demanded to know why the entire battalion wasn't present for an inspection, Adams attempted to explain that some were working and others sleeping. He said he'd send a white male lieutenant to show her how to lead the unit. "Over my dead body, sir," she replied. Adams risked court-martial to stand up for her women, and later was praised by the same general for their work.

"They had to be the best of the best," Cummings says. "Others had tried and failed to clear that backlog. They were not expected to achieve, and they overachieved."

Adams also led a boycott of segregated facilities offered by the Red Cross, with the unit running its own mess hall, hair salon and refreshment bar. Meanwhile, the women of the Six Triple Eight enjoyed certain freedoms denied them at home. The British welcomed them in public spaces and even into their homes for tea and Sunday dinner. And in France, the unit proudly marched in a victory parade, cheered by a grateful nation.

OVERDUE THANKS In 2019, Theres, Helm-Frazier and Cummings took "The Six Triple Eight" to Birmingham for a premiere screening at the old King Edward's School, where the 6888th was quartered. Robert Wood Johnson, U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom, joined the film's crew in presenting a plaque to commemorate the site.

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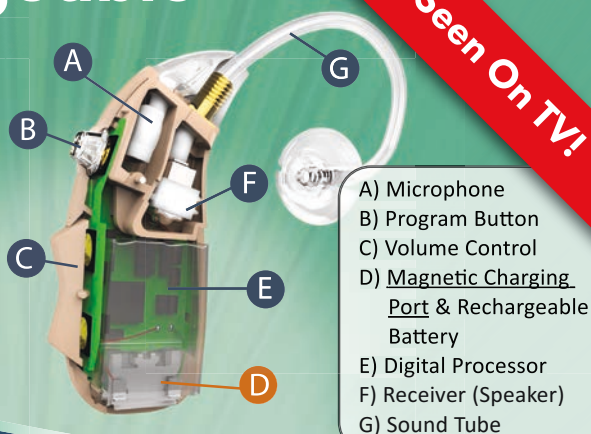
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Members of the Six Triple Eight and civilian postal employees sort mail in France in November 1945, two months after the war ended. U.S. Army Women's Museum

“Why haven’t I ever heard of these women?” Theres recalls Johnson asking. Where he shows the film, audiences respond with surprise, shock and even tears, especially African-American women. “I never knew this,” many say. “I’m so proud today.”

If few people know of the 6888th’s place in military history, fewer are aware that three of the four women buried at Normandy American Cemetery were from the Six Triple Eight. In 1945, Pfc. Mary Barlow and Mary Bankston died in a jeep accident in Rouen. Sgt. Dolores Browne died later from injuries. Unit members pooled their money to pay for caskets.

After the battalion disbanded at Fort Dix, N.J., in 1946, some of the women married and started families. Others stayed in the military or went to school on the GI Bill. All contributed to their communities, Cummings says.

One 6888th veteran, Millie Dunn Veasey, became the first female president of the Wake County, N.C., chapter of the NAACP and joined Martin Luther King Jr. at his 1963 March on Washington. She was also an active member of Charles T. Norwood American Legion Post 157 in Raleigh.

At the time “Six Triple Eight” filmed, the unit had 11 living members. Two passed away last summer: Elizabeth Barker Johnson, the first woman to enroll at Winston-Salem State University using the GI Bill, and Indiana Hunt-Martin, a life member of Erie County American Legion Post 1586 in Buffalo, N.Y.

Her mother was working at a TNT plant when she read an article about women joining the service, Janice Martin says. “She said it was one of the best experiences she ever had, and believed that all young people should have military training.”

The documentary showcases the surviving women, and incorporates archival footage, rare photos and video clips of older interviews to paint a complete picture of the 6888th’s legacy.

To date, “The Six Triple Eight” has screened at 12 film festivals. It was named Best Documentary at the 2020 National Black Film Festival and 2020 San Francisco Black Film Festival, and was a finalist at three others. In the wake of COVID-19, its producers are conducting virtual screenings too.

Meanwhile, legislation to award the 6888th with the Congressional Gold Medal unanimously passed the Senate on Dec. 10. At press time, a similar bill awaited action in the House.

Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., who introduced the bill, said the Six Triple Eight’s contributions cannot be understated. “Their efforts made certain that people like my mom and dad, two people that loved each other dearly, were able to communicate throughout the war while my dad was overseas, just like so many other Kansans and Americans who were separated from their loved ones,” he added.

Beyond that, women in today’s U.S. military stand on the shoulders of the 6888th, Helm-Frazier says. “They paved the way. You’ve got women going into the infantry, into the field artillery and through Ranger school all because the Six Triple Eight laid the foundation.” 🌿

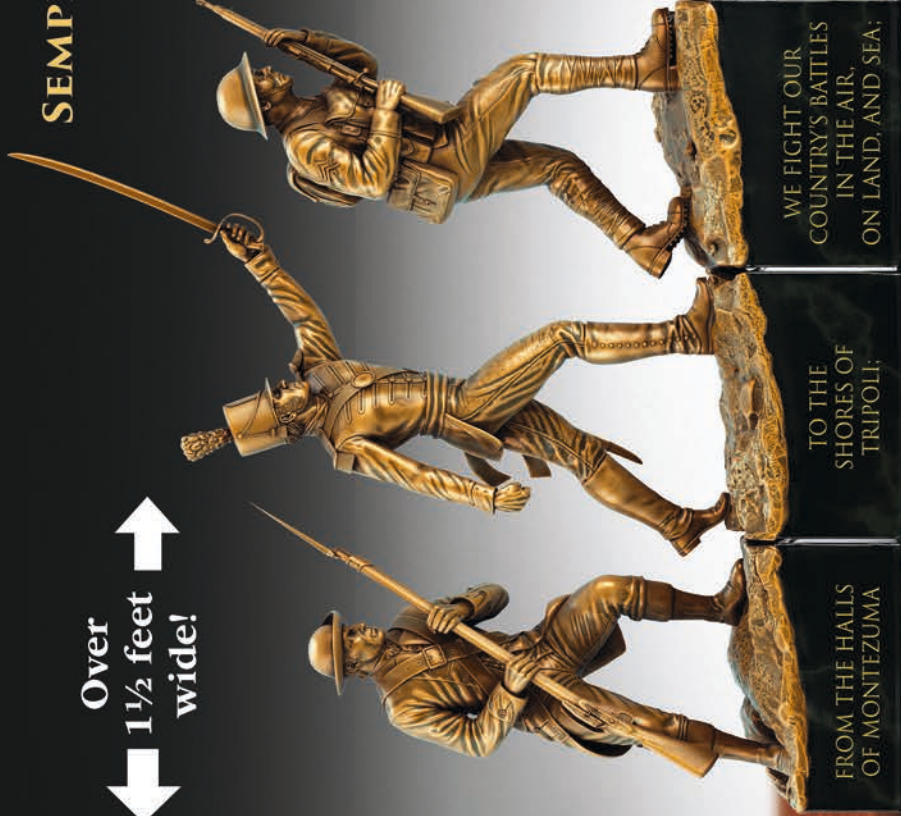
Matt Grills is managing editor of The American Legion Magazine.

For more about “The Six Triple Eight,” go to lincolnpennyfilms.com.

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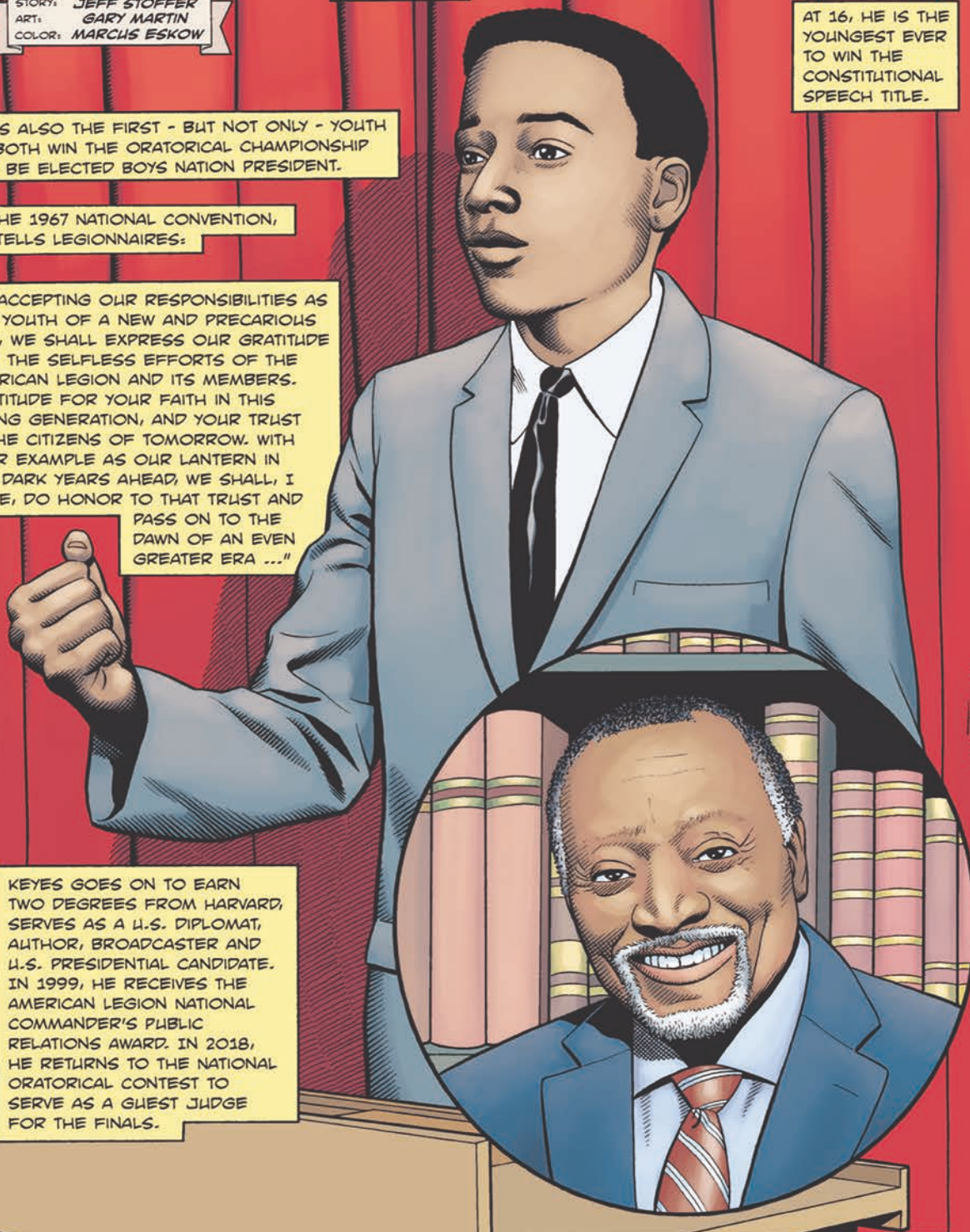
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KEYES GOES ON TO EARN TWO DEGREES FROM HARVARD, SERVES AS A U.S. DIPLOMAT, AUTHOR, BROADCASTER AND U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. IN 1999, HE RECEIVES THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL COMMANDER'S PUBLIC RELATIONS AWARD. IN 2018, HE RETURNS TO THE NATIONAL ORATORICAL CONTEST TO SERVE AS A GUEST JUDGE FOR THE FINALS.

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HISTORY

HOW IKE LED

Susan Eisenhower offers a personal glimpse into her grandfather's legacy.

The role of government, in Eisenhower's view, was to find measures that would foster conditions that would grow the middle class, and to provide a social safety net that would protect the elderly and those who suffered misfortunes such as an accident, illness, disability or unemployment. At the same time federal investments in infrastructure, such as the Eisenhower initiatives to build the Interstate Highway System and the St. Lawrence Seaway (with Canada), were vital for the growing economy. Despite these expenditures, and federal investment in advanced technology, Eisenhower balanced the Federal Budget three times in eight years – came close on another two – and left a budget surplus for his successor. After he ended the Korean War there were no combat casualties for the remaining seven and a half years of his presidency.

From "How Ike Led: The Principles Behind Eisenhower's Biggest Decisions" by Susan Eisenhower (Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2020)

Susan Eisenhower, Washington, D.C.-based policy strategist and granddaughter of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, 34th president of the United States and supreme allied commander during World War II, describes in her new book the unlikeliest of politicians. Yet the five-star general who led the Allies to victory over Germany in World War II, a life member of American Legion James R. Cutler Post 39 in Abilene, Kan., applied military training, strategy, patience and experience into some of the biggest decisions of the 20th century, not just for the United States but for the world.

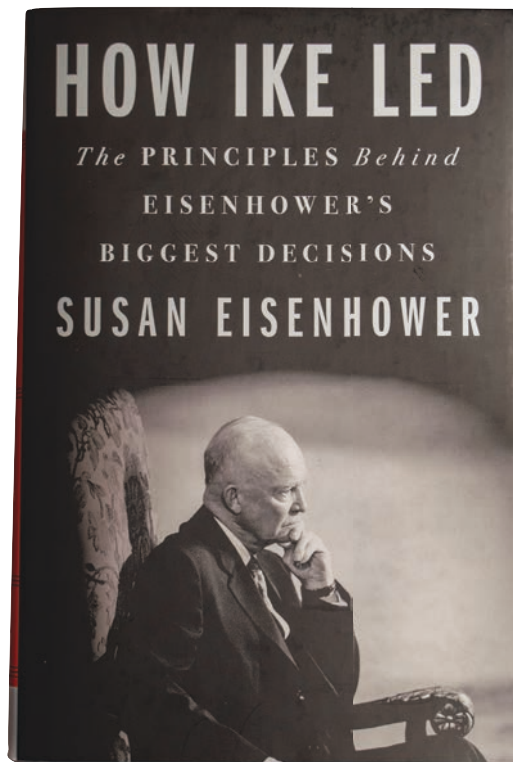
Susan Eisenhower, who served as a member of The American Legion's 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee, recently spoke with *The American Legion Magazine* about the book.

Why this book at this time?

I had been planning on one day to write this book, but given the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe and the end of World War II – as well as the dedication of the Eisenhower Memorial on the National Mall – it seemed the time was right this year.

Didn't both major parties recruit him to run for president, not really knowing he belonged to neither of them?

Yes, for six years after the war both political parties tried to persuade Eisenhower to run on their tickets. President Harry Truman twice offered to relinquish his run for the presidency if Ike would run as a Democrat. The five-star general decided finally that a two-party system was vital to our democracy; the GOP had not had a standard-bearer in



the White House for 20 years. Eisenhower took on this challenge, which included transforming the party from an isolationist to an internationalist party by the end of his two terms.

How did Washington respond to the "Middle Way" of Eisenhower?

President Eisenhower used the theme of the "Middle Way" to draw both parties together in the political middle to find a sustainable strategy for progress. At the end of his presidency, with the Democrats in control of Congress for six of those years, Eisenhower passed 80 percent of his legislative agenda.

I loved the maxims – especially "let's not make our mistakes in a hurry." How does a saying like that illustrate his method of problem-solving?

I think the maxims were mostly for fun, but this one does speak, in a humorous way, to the importance of study and planning.

History so often credits Truman with desegregating the military, but that executive order didn't produce tangible action during his administration, did it? What did Eisenhower do to move the needle on desegregation in the military, schools and the nation?

As a former five-star general, Eisenhower was in a unique position to take on the Defense Department to assure desegregation of the military and DoD schools. Ike's strategy on civil rights was to desegregate everything the federal government controlled, including the District of Columbia. It was Eisenhower's court appointments that presided over many of the legal cases after the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*. He used the 101st Airborne Division to escort nine African-American students to high

See *How Ike Led* on page 40

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How Ike Led *continued from page 38*

school after a mob tried to overturn Arkansas' compliance with the desegregation of schools. Eisenhower believed deeply in the rule of law, and also that every American has the same rights – a principle, he believed, that had to be vigorously defended.

You often refer to Ike's "personal relationship" with the American people, but he outwardly rejected attention and accolades. Explain that dichotomy.

Eisenhower, perhaps because of the war, averaged an approval rating of about 67 percent. Regarding attention, Eisenhower got plenty of it – after all, he personally held a weekly press conference – but he deeply believed in the importance of showcasing everyone on the team. And sometimes meeting your goals can be easier if you work behind the scenes.

He had his critics but made a point to never address their criticisms. Why?

Dwight Eisenhower would address the issue, but he believed that if you insulted people publicly you would inspire them to seek revenge or become uncooperative. He wanted to bring people together for a common purpose, and he was convinced that rudeness and reliance on turning issues into personal confrontations was not the way to do it.

It's been a few years since a military leader or even a war veteran has served as president. Does your book make the case that military service should again rise above partisan politics in the election of a president?

Eisenhower resigned his commission in the Army to run for president. He was enormously aided, as president, by the experience he had had during the war. However, he was a strong supporter of the line that must be drawn between active-duty military and the political environment in which they serve their country.

Does your book seek to correct misunderstandings about Eisenhower, and if so, what might they be?

I was able to address a number of myths, around civil rights, Sputnik, the missile gap and even some of his own way of running things. My intention was to show, rather than tell, what Eisenhower was like as a leader. And to make the case that character matters in forming bonds of trust, which is the bedrock of effective leadership.

If you were to identify one key takeaway for readers of this book, what would it be?

I want readers to think, as I do, that Dwight D. Eisenhower still has a lot to say to us. Today, we desperately need a leader who can unite Americans so we can address our problems together. Eisenhower took on that challenge in 1953, during another tumultuous time, and left the country better than he found it.

– Jeff Stoffer



NATIONAL CONVENTION

Where to stay in Phoenix

Here is the list of department hotel assignments for the 102nd American Legion National Convention, Aug. 27 to Sept. 2 in Phoenix. **Ask your department adjutant about accommodations.** The latest convention news is posted at legion.org/convention.



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65-69	\$22.08	\$17.05	\$36.13	\$27.75	\$71.25	\$54.50	\$176.63	\$134.75
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80-85	\$51.55	\$43.45	\$85.25	\$71.75	\$169.50	\$142.50	\$422.25	\$354.75

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This is a solicitation of individual insurance. A licensed insurance agent/producer may contact you by telephone. **These policies contain benefits, reductions, limitations, and exclusions to include a reduction in death benefits during the first two years of policy ownership.** In NY, during the first two years, 120% of premiums will be paid. Whole life insurance is underwritten by United of Omaha Life Insurance Company, 3300 Mutual of Omaha Plaza, Omaha, NE 68175 which is licensed nationwide except NY. Life insurance policies issued in NY are underwritten by Companion Life Insurance Company, Melville, NY 11747. Each underwriting company is responsible for its own financial and contractual obligations; and shares a financial interest with The American Legion, in this program. Policy Form ICC11L059P or state equivalent (7780L-0505 in FL, 828Y-0505 in NY). This policy is available to people not affiliated with The American Legion. *Ages 50-75 in NY; benefit amounts available may vary by state. **Not available in all states.

CAREERS

Special-ops strategies to nail your interviews



Gone are the days of traditional job interviews with routine questions like “Tell me about yourself” and “Why are you the right candidate for the job?”

The answers to those questions are important, and inevitably you will end up providing that information.

But behavioral-based interviewing is the current trend and involves sharing specifics about how you demonstrated certain skills and capabilities.

Expect questions such as:

- Tell me about a time you handled a challenging situation. What was the situation, what did you do, and what was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a time when you made a mistake and what you did to rectify it.
- Share an instance of when you were overwhelmed and could not complete everything. How did you handle it and prioritize?

When answering these types of questions, you are giving your interviewer a wealth of information by putting everything into context. You’re not just saying you have great time-management skills. Rather, you’re sharing a specific example of how you managed your time.

How does this relate to military special operations? Simply put, the assessment and selection process for special ops is designed to pressure-test candidates and, in turn, reveal their character. The same is true for interviews when questions are meant to push candidates outside their comfort zones and provide in-depth answers that will accurately reflect how they think and act in real-life work situations.

Also, remember that your answers are a great way to transition from “telling” to “selling.” No longer is it enough to tell someone what you can do. Rather, you need to sell them on how well you did something by sharing specific examples. Further, it makes for much more interesting interview sessions. Most managers and human resources professionals do not enjoy the interviewing process. If you can make it less arduous and more interesting, you’ll have immediately positioned yourself in the top tier of candidates and given yourself an competitive advantage.

Wendy Enelow is a master résumé writer, and the author of “Expert Résumé & LinkedIn Profiles for Managers & Executives” and other titles.
wendy@wendyenelow.com



Soldiers of the 56th Guards Air Assault Brigade of the Russian Airborne Forces participate in a final inspection. Wikimedia Commons

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The bear sharpens its claws

A recent analysis by *The Economist* illustrates the dramatic advances and investments Russia has made in its military in recent years.

“Russian military expenditure approximately doubled between 2005 and 2018,” according to the report. “Russia’s annual military spending probably stands somewhere between \$150 billion and \$180 billion,” *The Economist* adds, citing research conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses. That’s about 4 percent of Russia’s GDP.

On the strength of that spending binge, Russia has added 600 new warplanes, 840 helicopters and 2,300 drones. It has also poured resources into “a host of lurid weapons such as hypersonic gliders, radioactive torpedoes designed to pollute coastal areas, and nuclear-powered cruise missiles capable of circling the Earth indefinitely.”

These investments have transformed the capability and quality of Russia’s military: “Whereas 99 percent of Russian armor in 2007 was classified as ‘legacy’ – i.e., introduced into service more than three decades ago – today fully 27 percent is modern ... Russia’s warplanes have gone from being 97 percent legacy to being 71 percent modern in that time.”

EDUCATION

Student rights with COEs



Q: *I just enrolled in truck driving school. I received my Certificate of Eligibility (COE), and will receive 100 percent of my Chapter 33 Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits. My school has requested my tuition payment in advance. Then, after my Chapter 33 benefits are sent to the school, the financial office will reimburse me. Nevertheless, I do not have \$10,000 up front for the tuition and fees payment. Should I borrow the money? I assumed VA would pay my tuition and I would not have to pay in advance.*

A: Public Law 115-407, Section 103 states that if a student has a valid COE, the school is not permitted to restrict attendance or ask for payment until 90 days after classes start. A student who believes a school is not abiding by this law may file a complaint on the GI Bill website at benefits.va.gov/gibill/feedback.asp.

Valerie Heffner is a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Apache Junction, Ariz. askvalerie@legion.org

ECONOMY

Pick up the Tab

Coca-Cola has announced it is phasing out its long-running diet soda Tab. Although Tab has a loyal following, its fans are too small in number to sustain the brand.

As *The Wall Street Journal* reports, "Tab represented 0.1 percent of the \$22 billion in global sales of diet cola in 2019" – far behind Diet Coke (35 percent) and Coke Zero Sugar (22 percent).

Tab, Coca-Cola's first diet soda, was launched in 1963 in response to the success of Royal Crown's Diet Rite Cola. "By 1980, Tab had a commanding lead over all other diet sodas," according to the *Journal*. But when the company decided to launch Diet Coke in 1982, Tab's popularity rapidly drained away. Within a year, Diet Coke would claim 17 percent of the diet-soda market. Coca-Cola also plans to phase out Diet Coke Feisty Cherry, Sprite Lymonade and Coke Life.



Wikimedia Commons

LIBRARIES

Better late than never

A polite, if tardy, Brit has returned two books – 48 years late. Late fees for the books total more than \$10,800.

The long-overdue books include an early edition of the "Thomas the Train" series – "The Railway Series No. 22: Small Railway Engines" – as well as "Learning with Color Architecture: The Great Art of Building." As UPI reports, the Basingstoke Discovery Centre in Hampshire, England, said the books were mailed to the library.

They were returned with a polite note: "We inadvertently took these with us when we moved from Basingstoke in 1972. Please accept my apologies for the late return of these items ... Andy." Fortunately for Andy, the library waived late fees last April in response to the pandemic.

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MEDIA

A new, edgier Tango Alpha Lima



The mad scientists of the Tango Alpha Lima podcast have been tinkering in their opulent and luxurious refurbished broom closet at American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis.

They have adjusted their secret formulas to concoct a sleeker, more dynamic podcast for the ears of veterans and servicemembers. When season two kicked off in January, Tango Alpha Lima episodes started publishing at 9 a.m. Eastern on Tuesdays. The initial episode features Jared Lyon, founder and CEO of Student Veterans of America, discussing the evolution of the American Legion-authored GI Bill to serve today's warriors.

Tango Alpha Lima, which debuted in April 2020, is hosted by American Legion members Mark Seavey, Jeff Daly and Ashley Gorbulja-Maldonado. Each week a new episode features the three post-9/11 veterans interviewing special guests such as Lyon, or exploring current events, interesting trends and unusual stories of interest to the military community.

More than three dozen episodes in both audio and video formats are available at legion.org/tangoalphalima. If you missed any episodes from the first season, check out these highlights, at right, of what to listen to or watch.

— Henry Howard

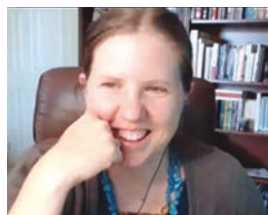
“Fast forward to the events of Sept. 11 and our generation, which has served in the longest period of sustained combat in our nation’s history. Fun fact: it has been served mostly by millennials. If anyone gives millennials a bad rap, they are pretty bad---, in my opinion.”

Jared Lyon, founder and CEO, Student Veterans of America



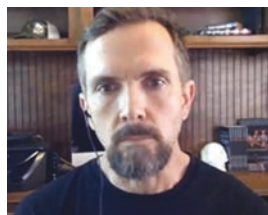
Episode 29: “The advice that I would give to people is to take it (COVID-19) seriously. The reality is that this thing can hit you pretty hard.”

Kermit Jones, an American Legion member, Navy veteran and physician



Episode 14: “I got a chance to help a few women who were entering the military ... it filled me up to be a touchpoint for them.”

Amanda Huffman, Air Force veteran and Women of the Military podcast host



Episode 12: “Everybody is out to die for someone they don’t know.”

Retired Navy SEAL Team Six senior chief **Justin Sheffield** on his fellow team members

FLAG ADVOCACY

A flag for every classroom, from the Montana American Legion

Montana state law requires a U.S. flag in every classroom, but only if schools can afford it or have them donated. A 2020 resolution by the American Legion Department of Montana will ensure the Stars and Stripes is displayed in the classrooms of the state’s 820-plus schools.

Flags are 16-by-24 and purchased by the department through Emblem Sales at \$10 each. Department Commander Jeff Nelson said post commanders and program chairmen are asked to contact local schools and verify that every classroom has a



U.S. flag. The department is also encouraging community members, civic organizations and others to sponsor flags.

“As we grew up, we took it for granted that the flag was always in the classroom,” Nelson says. “In today’s schools, some of those traditions and customs ... have been neglected, although not intentionally. Not only is it

Americanism and patriotism ... but it’s getting to spread the word of The American Legion – that we’re active in our community.”



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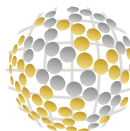
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Chuck Yeager, legendary fighter ace and test pilot, in a 2009 *Men’s Journal* interview

Capt. Chuck Yeager sits in his Bell X-1 cockpit Sept. 26, 1947. Wikimedia Commons

MEMORIAM

‘As brave as he was fast’

Chuck Yeager – retired Air Force brigadier general, combat veteran of two wars and aviation trailblazer – died Dec. 7 at 97 in Los Angeles.

“America lost a great veteran, but heaven gained a great pilot,” American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford said. “Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager was as brave as he was fast. He was not only the first to break the sound barrier but he was a World War II fighter ace. The one-time private in the Army Air Forces lived to see the creation of the U.S. Space Force. The history of America’s aviation success simply could not be told without including significant space to Charles E. ‘Chuck’ Yeager, one of the greatest pilots that ever lived. He was a real American hero.”

A life member of American Legion Post 111 in Hamlin, W.Va., Yeager spoke at the organization’s 1990 national convention, telling delegates, “Having been involved on the leading technological development (of U.S. air power) for quite some time, I appreciate what you as Legionnaires have done and are still doing today. ... We, you and I, have been involved in a lot of activity in supporting our country, and all I can say today is, keep up the good work.”



Chuck Yeager, 2012 Wikimedia Commons

YEAGER’S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Flew 64 missions over Europe during World War II, shooting down 13 German aircraft (including five in one day)
- Evaded the Germans with the help of the French Resistance after being shot down himself in 1944
- Recruited as a test pilot for the new Air Force
- Became the first person to break the sound barrier, flying the experimental X-1 45,000 feet over the Rogers Dry Lake in the Mojave Desert
- In 1953, set a world speed record of 1,650 miles per hour in the X-1A
- Served as commandant of the Aerospace Research Pilot School, which trained several Apollo and space shuttle astronauts
- Flew a total of 127 Vietnam War combat missions
- Received the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Legion of Merit, the Purple Heart, the Congressional Silver Medal (equivalent to a noncombat Medal of Honor) and the Presidential Medal of Freedom
- Broke the sound barrier again in 1997 in an F-15, on the 50th anniversary of his most famous flight

Sources: Britannica.com, chuckyeager.org

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MEDIA

‘To Strengthen a Nation’ series complete, online

The final episode of The American Legion’s centennial documentary was released online in December.

“To Strengthen a Nation” covers the history and influence of The American Legion in episodes released periodically since April 2019, soon after the organization’s 100th birthday.

In the documentary, Air Force veteran Lorna Duyn and Army veteran Jeric Wilhelmsen – actors and members of Hollywood American Legion Post 43 in California – connect the dots between legacy and vision of the nation’s largest veterans service organization. The entire series can be viewed on the American Legion YouTube channel at [youtube.com/americanlegionHQ](https://www.youtube.com/americanlegionHQ), or viewed and downloaded from the American Legion Vimeo channel at [vimeo.com/americanlegion](https://www.vimeo.com/americanlegion).

- **Prelude** – Burrow back to the roots of veterans organizations, from the Revolution to the Civil War, and the lessons The American Legion learned from its predecessors.
- **Episode 1: Formation of The American Legion** – Explore the 1919 gatherings of war-weary U.S. troops in France, who



planted the seed that would grow to more than 684,000 members operating in posts nationwide by the first anniversary of the Great War’s end.

- **Episode 2: Mutual Helpfulness** – Learn about The American Legion’s legacy of support for veterans.
- **Episode 3: Economic Opportunity** – Discover how the organization has helped

veterans find jobs, start businesses and make successful transitions to civilian life.

- **Episode 4: National Security** – Learn about the organization’s legacy of support for a strong defense and members of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- **Episode 5: American Legion Baseball** – Duyn and Wilhelmsen travel to Milbank, S.D., to learn the origins of American Legion Baseball and see how the program has long promoted citizenship through sportsmanship.
- **Episode 6: Americanism** – Learn the reasons why The American Legion made “Americanism” a pillar value.
- **Episode 7: A Square Deal for Every Child** – Trace the roots

of The American Legion’s role in improving the lives of young people, from the early 1920s to today.

- **Episode 8: Emergency Response** – Throughout its history, The American Legion has put military training to use during disasters ranging from floods to terrorist attacks to a global pandemic.
- **Episode 9: Community Service** – Discover the roots and evolution of The American Legion’s role in service to local communities throughout the past century.

- **Episode 10: Honor & Remembrance** – Hear the ways in which the organization has paid tribute to the nation’s fallen, from overseas cemetery flags to national memorials and local honor guards.

- **Episode 11: The American Legion Family** – Learn the origins of the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and the American Legion Riders.

- **Episode 12: Legacy & Vision** – Duyn and Wilhelmsen return to Hollywood Post 43, where they reflect on all they’ve discovered, hopeful for a second century of veterans strengthening America.

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HAM RADIO

Changes for American Legion Amateur Radio Club

Effective in January, The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC) ceased producing a monthly newsletter, and will no longer conduct annual special event operations via K9TAL marking The American Legion's birthday and Veterans Day.

In fall 2010, five licensed amateur radio operators and employees of National Headquarters felt there was a need and a place for amateur radio within The American Legion. Relying on guidance from members of the California American Legion Amateur Radio Service (CALARS), the group developed a plan for a national program that led to the National Executive Committee sanctioning TALARC in May 2011.

Looking back, I'm reminded that the operation of TALARC/K9TAL was not intended to be a long-term function of National Headquarters, but a mechanism to create greater awareness of amateur radio within The American Legion, and to promote among posts and departments an avenue for community service. I believe the momentum generated by the startup of K9TAL has



been the spark that has rekindled interest in amateur radio within the Legion, and the proof is in the numbers.

About five years ago, TALARC had more than 1,100 members with 13 FCC-licensed clubs among American Legion posts. Today we have well over 4,000 members and 50 post-supported clubs – several with in-post radio stations – doing the great work of The

American Legion within the framework of amateur radio.

In light of that success, we will now turn our attention to American Legion posts and departments for widespread promotion and continued growth of TALARC nationwide. TALARC will continue to receive and respond to emails at **k9tal@legion.org**, and its web page at **legion.org/hamradio** will remain active.

As amateur radio operators, we bring a lot to the table in the way of assistance during times of disaster – when, as we like to say, “all else fails.” But we also have a great deal to offer – and more often do – in support of local posts and the communities they serve.

– Marty Justis W9WMJ, TALARC president



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ECONOMY

Stock market scorecard by presidency

Dow Jones Industrial Average performance

Calvin Coolidge	+230.5%
Bill Clinton	+228.9%
Franklin Roosevelt	+198.6%
Barack Obama	+148.3%
Ronald Reagan	+147.3%
Dwight Eisenhower	+123.7%
Harry Truman	+75.2%
George H.W. Bush	+41.3%
Gerald Ford	+40.6%
Donald Trump	+35.5%
Lyndon Johnson	+26.1%
Warren Harding	+23.4%
John Kennedy	+15.8%
Jimmy Carter	-0.7%
George W. Bush	-26.5%
Richard Nixon	-28.3%
Herbert Hoover	-82.1%

Source: Samuel Stebbins/USA Today

PERSONAL FINANCE



What we're hearing from boomer veterans

FOCUS ON FINANCES



J.J. MONTANARO

As veterans, you've probably been through your fair share of hot washes and after-action reviews (AAR). With that common experience in mind, let's look at some of the findings from last fall's Charles Schwab Modern Retirement Survey of boomer veterans – an AAR of sorts.

The survey's numbers caught my attention because they provide a rather encouraging snapshot, considering the challenges of 2020.

Here are some of the most interesting findings:

▪ **Some priorities are enduring.** The past year led a lot of us to reassess what is truly important in our lives. For veterans who participated in this survey, the top two priorities were health and family. Those types of set-in-stone commitments can mean the difference between success and failure with your financial goals. Our priorities provide lighthouse-like guidance as we assess our financial decisions, big and small. How have your financial goals weathered the storm?

▪ **Start early and keep at it.** On average, survey respondents had accumulated nearly \$1 million in retirement savings. While these veterans weren't lottery winners or titans of industry, they did share a common strategy: they leveraged time. Around a third started planning and saving for retirement in their 20s, and 70 percent were well on their way by their 30s. That's a lesson we should all be shouting from our rooftops.

▪ **Everybody can use a road map.** Clearly, these respondents have done a good job accumulating. However, only 39 percent had a written plan to achieve their financial goals. Given the complexity and ever-changing landscape of taxes, benefits, health care and the markets, a written plan provides a foundation from which to operate during tumultuous times. Now is the time to craft your own.

▪ **Embrace evolving family dynamics.** While nearly 90 percent of these boomer veterans believe their quality of life in retirement will be better than their parents', they are also focused on spending their money. In fact, 63 percent favor enjoying their wealth rather than leaving it to their kids. Right or wrong, I have noticed that an overall desire to "leave an inheritance" is not as strong as it was 30 or so years ago when I entered the world of financial planning.

▪ **Steady your nerves.** One of my mottos has always been, "Don't let headlines drive your decision cycle." Of the veterans Schwab surveyed, only 4 percent reported unplanned withdrawals from retirement accounts during the pandemic. That's a great example for all of us.

At USAA, we are excited about our relationship with Charles Schwab and look forward to the insights, expertise and, of course, products and services it opens up to our members.

J.J. Montanaro is a certified financial planner with USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. Submit questions for him online.

legion.org/usaa/focusonfinances

BY THE NUMBERS

\$27.4 billion

Estimated Valentine's Day spending in the United States in 2020

\$6.7 billion

Increase in spending from 2019

Source: statista.com



StockSnap

MEDIA

The American Legion Media Alliance: Three things to know

In its first year, The American Legion Media Alliance (TALMA) has made significant gains and continues to grow. Here are three things to know about TALMA, an organization for American Legion Family members who are involved in media, public relations and other communication activities at the post, district or department levels:

- TALMA conducted seven virtual training sessions in 2020, including topics on getting your post's news into local media, tips and tricks on shooting video, best practices for social media and starting your own podcast.
- The inaugural contest in 2020 had nearly 100 entries. The contest is expanding in 2021 to include more categories, such as the Chairman's Award and the Innovation Award.
- In addition to virtual training sessions and the annual contest, membership benefits include a private Facebook group page, media credentials, and a handy "Tips and Tricks" guide.

To join or learn more about TALMA, go to legion.org/talma.



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The custom styling includes a detachable faux shearling collar, two front-zip breast pockets, two front flap pockets with additional side-entry pockets, two interior pockets, cuffs with snaps, knit hem, and comfortable quilted woven polyester lining.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Large (42-44) 01-30329-012 | <input type="checkbox"/> XXXL (54-56) 01-30329-015 |
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How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org or submit information via our website, www.legion.org/reunions.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine will publish a group's listing only once a year.**

Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life

memberships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership.** Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.** Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

ARMY

3rd Plt 501st MP Co (Bamberg, Germany, 1990-1993), San Diego, 6/16-20, Robert Howard, (407) 412-1443

MARINES

Btry Adjust 3/11 Mar (All Eras), Washington, 8/25-29, Brian Seals, (765) 580-2734, bseals2013@gmail.com; **Mar Corps Disbursing Assn**, Las Vegas, 8/8-12, Kevin Gascon, (760) 458-2655, mojorisin68@hotmail.com; **VMFA-115**, Pensacola, FL, 5/6-9, Patti Kaas, (717) 422-6796, kaasfamily4@gmail.com

NAVY

Albert David DE/FF 1050, Washington, 9/17-20, John Pabis, (623) 584-0453, jspabis@aol.com; **Andrew Jackson SSBN 619**, Orlando, FL, 8/30-9/4, Jack "Doc" McAllister Jr., (941) 493-7488, patipapa37@yahoo.com; **Bluefish SS 222 & SSN 675**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 4/22-25, John Wittenstrom, (910) 638-1716, jwittenstrom@nc.rr.com; **Hornet CV 8, CV/CVA/CVS 12 & Essex CV/CVA/CVS 9, LHD 2**, San Diego, 9/13-18, Sandy Burket, (814) 224-5063, hornetcva@aol.com; **Monongahela AO 178**, Metairie, LA, 6/3-6, Jerry Miller, (417) 247-7744, jjmusn@aol.com; **Moosbrugger DD 980**, Branson, MO, 6/4-6, KellyJo Jones, (432) 266-8693, kjones@flygirltravel.com; **Tidewater AD 31**, Branson, MO, 9/13-16, Dean Agee, (417) 759-2860, rdmlagee@gmail.com

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Post 69, MI: Theodore F. Boyden, Michael L. Bugajski, Ronald J. Snow, Ronald J. Stahl

IN SEARCH OF

17th Armd Inf Bn (WWII), Bill Vosseler, (610) 558-2163, hellcatnews@yahoo.com
Army Personnel at Freedom Hill, Da Nang, Vietnam (1969-1970), John Laurin, (261) 546-1222

Army Personnel Ctr, Finance Office (Oakland, CA, 1966-1967), John Haggard, (231) 342-2905, samhunts9@yahoo.com

B Co 1st BG 12th Inf 4th Inf Div (Fort Lewis, WA, 1959-1961), Rich Bortolin, (650) 343-9185, rbortolin@aol.com

Marine Variety Show Members (Apr-Dec 1953), Ed Potts, (269) 651-5900, edpotts683@gmail.com

S-6 Div, Sperry AS 12 (San Diego, 1967-1969), Bill Turner, (305) 986-1931, billjohn@icloud.com
TUSLOG Det 175 (Incirlik CDI, Turkey, 1970-1972), Robert Siminski, (251) 533-5470, yankcairn@comcast.net

USAF-AO-K (Yongsan, Korea, 1972), Nick Cline, (703) 895-7967, ncline@dcaacaw.com

TAPS

Edward D. Bezio Sr., Dept. of Massachusetts. Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2012-2013 and Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Memb. 2013-2020.

Robert L. Bowen, Dept. of Virginia. Nat'l Vice Cmdr. 1996-1997, Dept Cmdr. 1991-1992, Nat'l Citizens Flag Alliance Dept. Chmn. 1994-1997, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cmsn. Memb. 1993-1995 and 1997 to 2002, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cmsn. Vice Chmn. 1995-1996 and Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1992-1993.

Arthur D. Herbison, Dept. of Wisconsin. Dept. Cmdr. 1999-2000, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 2000-2004, Nat'l Conv. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 2006-2008, Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Vice Chmn. 1997-2004, Nat'l Veterans Employment & Education Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 2005-2006, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 2004-2008, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2008-2013 and Nat'l Legis. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 2004-2005 and Nat'l Veterans Affairs & Rehab. Cncl. Memb. 2013-2014.

Ronald L. Michalski, Dept. of Nevada. Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 2011-2014, Nat'l Americanism Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 2015-2020, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 2014-2020 and Nat'l Internal Affairs Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 2014-2015.

CANCELED REUNIONS

If your military reunion has been canceled, let us know by sending an email to reunions@legion.org. For a list of canceled reunions, go to legion.org/reunions/canceled. If your military reunion is going virtual, post a listing at legion.org/reunions or send an email to reunions@legion.org.

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Dear men, "I don't want anything for Valentine's Day" is the same as "I'm fine." You're welcome.

A MAN found a magic lamp with a genie who offered him three wishes.

"For my first wish," he said, "I'd like to be rich."

"OK, Rich," the genie replied. "What's your second wish?"

I HAD my first stand-up gig in front of an audience tonight. It didn't go well. I started my bit and some guy started to heckle me, yelling, "Hey you! Down in front! We're trying to watch the movie!"

TWO YOUNG MEN were discussing marriage. One asked, "You wouldn't marry a girl just for her money, would you?"

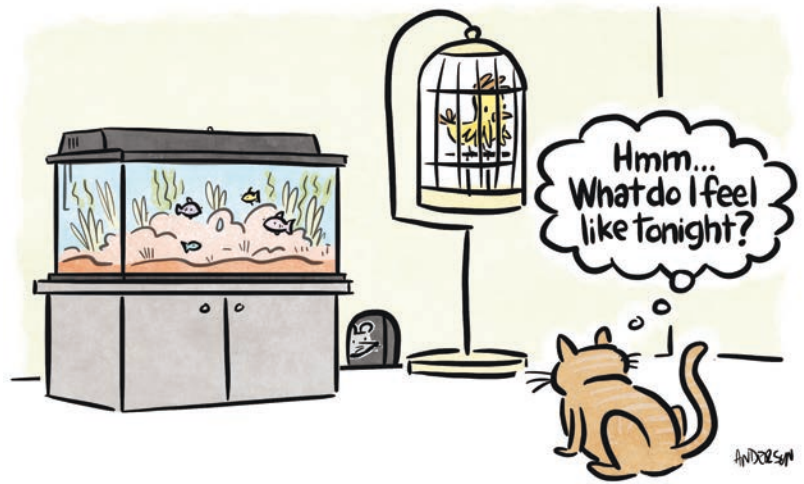
"No," the other man replied, "but I wouldn't have the heart to let her die an old maid just because she had money, either."

I ORDERED an extension course called "How to Deal With Life's Disappointments." Yesterday, I got the first lesson by mail. It was an empty envelope.

A STUDENT was told to write an essay of 250 words about a car. He turned in the following: "My uncle bought a car. He was riding in the country when it broke down on a hill. I guess this makes 25 words. The other 225 are what my uncle said when he was walking back to town, but they're not fit for publication."



"It's got a nice open floor plan."



A MAN took his trained elephant to the circus. "Dance," he commanded as the band began to play, and instantly the elephant started to dance around as the owner of the circus observed closely. When the musical number ended, the man turned to the owner.

"Well, are we hired?" he asked.

"No," the owner replied.

The man was stunned. "Why not?" he asked.

"Because the band was playing a waltz and the elephant did a mamba."

A POLICE OFFICER just knocked on my door and told me my dogs were chasing people on bikes. They don't even own bikes.

I MAILED a Valentine's Day card and my tax return at the same time. Now I can't remember which one I signed "Guess who? XOXO."

"I USED TO THINK my vocabulary was good. Then I got a thesaurus. Now I think it's exemplary." – Matt Maran

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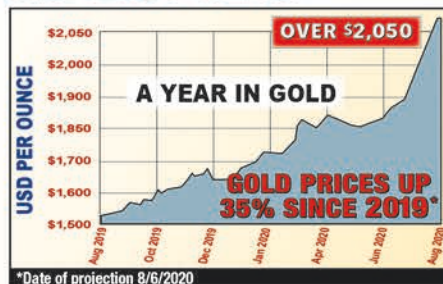
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